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SKETCHES
OF
JUDAISM AND THE JEWS.

BY THE
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TO

THE REV. HUGH JAMES ROSE, B.D.,

PRINCIPAL OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON,

AND

CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF

CANTERBURY,

THE FOLLOWING SKETCHES,

NOW FIRST COLLECTED,

ARE,

AS A SMALL TOKEN OF RESPECT,

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE READER.

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SKETCHES.

I.

THE INTELLECTUAL STATE OF THE RABBINICAL JEWS.

IN this country, most people know only the outside of the Jewish nation. They see or hear only of two classes—rich Jews and poor Jews. When a rich Jew is named, they think of the funds; and at the mention of a poor Jew, oranges, pencils, old clothes, &c., are generally the associated ideas. The Continental traveller soon makes a different classification. He finds, in the language of Christians, *enlightened* (*aufgeklärte*) Jews, and bigots; or, in the phraseology of the Jews themselves, old-fashioned and new-fashioned Jews (*altmodische und neumodische Juden*.) The epithet *bigot*, in modern times so fearful, may deter many an one from inquiring farther concerning the class upon whom it is bestowed. But the quiet and impartial observer soon

discovers that the term bigot, when applied to Jews, means nothing more dreadful than it often does when used among Christians. It simply signifies a man who thinks that his forefathers had some wit and knowledge too; and that wisdom is not one of the inventions of the nineteenth century. That which Continental Gentiles call a bigoted Jew is, as the Jews rightly express it, an old-fashioned, or in other words, a Rabbinical Jew.

From the dispersion to the latter end of the last century, Rabbinism prevailed universally amongst the Jewish nation, with the exception of the one small sect of the Karaites. If asked to give a concise, yet adequate, idea of this system, I should say, it is Jewish Popery: just as Popery may be defined to be Gentile Rabbinism. Its distinguishing feature is, that it asserts the transmission of an oral or traditional law of equal authority with the written law of God, at the same time, that, like Popery, it resolves tradition into the present opinions of the existing Church. And, as this oral law is most minute in its details, and altogether immutable in its decisions, it has made the intellectual and moral state of all those who receive it almost

stationary; so that a Rabbinical Jew of the present day, as he exists in Poland or Palestine, conveys a tolerably accurate idea of what the Jews were centuries ago. It is true that the variation of the national fortunes, and the rise of such men as Jarchi and Maimonides, has had considerable influence in modifying or directing the studies and dogmas of the people; but any one, who has had much opportunity of observation, will find a striking resemblance between the habits of mind described in the New Testament and those now general amongst the Rabbinical Jews. Acute, subtle, disputatious, with a profound love of learning, and an uncontrollable energy in the pursuit of knowledge—such is their general character. Any one who has travelled through Poland, and has known enough of Hebrew and Jewish to inquire into the state of the Jews, will readily admit that they are an educated and highly intellectual people. It is true that they are altogether ignorant of Greek and Latin literature, and consider it a sin to learn any modern language. But a nation which has a learned language besides the vernacular dialect, an extensive literature in that language, and which studies that learned

language almost universally,—so that it is a rare thing to meet a Jew, however forlorn and destitute, who cannot read it fluently, and understand it at least a little,—such a nation must be regarded as an educated and intellectual people.

It is true they can make no pretension to Belles Lettres. The vernacular dialect of the Polish Jews is still what was formerly the language of the whole class of German Jews, and is now called *Jewish* (Jüdisch). Half a century ago it was commonly called Jewish-German (Jüdisch-Deutsch); but this latter term now signifies good German, printed in Jewish characters; whereas Jewish is ancient German, mixed up with Hebrew and Rabbinical; and, in Poland, with a small addition of Polish. All the theological terms are Hebrew or Rabbinical; many of the names of household implements, and not a few imprecations and terms of abuse, are Polish. It is not an uncommon thing to hear the three languages in one short sentence—as, *iach gei die Beheimos umpoiyin*, “I am going to water the cattle.” *Beheimos* (behemoth) is Hebrew; *umpoiyin* is of Polish extraction; the rest is German. This dialect, though very free

from rules of grammar, and uncertain as to its orthography, possesses a tolerably extensive literature, which forms the *lecture* of the Jewesses and *ammaratzin** or unlearned Jews. Prayers, poems, dramas, legends, commentaries, and extracts from the Rabbinical writings, have been published in this dialect. Athias also published the Old Testament complete in the Jewish character; but the language approximates so nearly to good German, that this translation has never become general in Poland. The New Testament, Pentateuch, Isaiah, Psalms, &c., have been published by the London Society in the Polish-Jewish dialect. The favourite book is R. Jacob's "Commentary on the Pentateuch and Hapthoroth," or weekly portions of the prophets, usually known by the title "Tsen-norennah," or the Weiber Chumash, the women's Pentateuch. This book, which is a compilation of all that is absurd and marvellous in Rabbinical lore, furnishes the

* *Amhoretz* and its plural, *ammaratzin*, are taken from the Hebrew, *am haaretz*, "people of the land;" and is, amongst the learned Jews, a term of great reproach. See "Old Paths," pp. 3, 233—235.

Sabbath reading for the female Jewish population; and shews, on every page, the low state of religious knowledge amongst the Rabbinical Jewesses. If the Biblical citations were taken away, it might be classed with "Tom Thumb" or "Jack the Giant-killer." As it stands, it appears to the Christian reader as the most inconceivable mixture of absurdity and gravity. But, after all, though the female part of the Jewish community be neglected, the Rabbinical Jews must still be regarded as an educated people. Double attention is bestowed upon the male children. Almost every Jewish boy learns to read and translate the five Books of Moses. If he be an orphan or poor, either the congregation or some benevolent individuals voluntarily supply the means. There was some years ago, in a town on the Continent, a Jewish tailor, who devoted all that he could save or spare to the one object of educating destitute children. He made it his business to seek for them, and paid a Melammed, or teacher, to instruct them. No doubt the Popish idea of the merit of good works, and the superstitious notion, that, if a child cannot repeat a certain

prayer in the synagogue, the soul of the deceased parent remains in purgatory,* have great influence in procuring the careful instruction of Jewish boys. But this does not affect the plain matter of fact, that the greatest reproach that can be cast upon a Rabbinical Jew is, that he neglects the education of his children. Poverty does not present the same bar that it does in this country. There are, amongst the Jews, whole hosts of Melammedim, or schoolmasters, whose terms are very low; and who, though poor themselves, are never hard upon their poor brethren touching the matter of payment. In the class above the very poor, some five or six fathers of families club together to pay a Melammed; and those who can at all afford it keep a private tutor in their own family. A Jew, with one-quarter of the means possessed by our middling tradespeople, would be sure to have a private tutor. His wants and those of his family are few. The Jew is, in general, temperate, or rather abstemious. In fact, no nation indulges less in luxury, or practises self-denial more than the Jews. Their clothing, furniture, and food, are much plainer than that considered absolutely

* See "Old Paths," p. 150.

necessary by Christians in the same rank of life. They can, therefore, afford to expend more upon what they justly think more important—the education of their children. The traveller through Poland is often astonished at finding, in a miserable Jewish inn, which presents a picture of filth and wretchedness, a private tutor for the landlord's children. Sometimes the salary is very small; but, amongst the respectable Jews, twenty ducats for the *zman*, or, season, is not unusual. There are two *zmans*, or seasons, in the year,—one from the feast of passover to that of tabernacles; the second, from the latter to the former festival.

At four or five years of age, the Jewish child begins to learn the Aleph Beth. As soon as he can read the Hebrew text with points, the work of translation commences. There is no learning of grammar. The Melammed teaches the translation at once. He pronounces the Hebrew word, and tells the meaning, and repeats a given portion in this way until the child knows it. Thus, without grammar or lexicon, without any reference to roots or conjugations, the Jewish children learn the language of their fore-

fathers; and it is surprising to see the progress which they make in the course of a year. When the child can translate tolerably, he then begins the Pentateuch again, with the "Commentary" of R. Solomon Jarchi. The style of this commentator is concise, and often obscure. But the oral instruction clears away the difficulties. The Melammed repeats the words, giving the sense as before, and the child repeats after him until he has learned his task, which is for a week, either the whole weekly portion of the law, or a part of it, according to his abilities. When he has mastered Rashi, he begins the Talmud. At first, the oral method is used as before; but very soon the child is left to shift for himself; and usually, at ten years of age, he is able to make out the sense by the help of Jarchi's "Commentary." At thirteen he becomes a *bar mitzvah*, the son of the commandment, and is then responsible for his own sins, which, up to that time, the father has borne; and is expected to expound some difficult passage of the Talmud publicly in the Synagogue. Of course, all Jewish children do not pursue these studies so far as the Talmud and its commentaries. The mass of the people are

very poor, and many are, therefore, obliged to rest satisfied with a knowledge of the Pentateuch. Others stop at Rashi's "Commentary." Others exhibit no taste for learning. But still, after deducting all these classes, a greater proportion of Jewish children receive a learned education than amongst Christians. Poor youths of promise find a seminary and books in the Beth Hammedrash, or house of instruction, which exists in every large congregation, where the Rabbi presides and superintends the studies. They are supported by voluntary contribution, and wander about from one celebrated Rabbi to another in order to complete their studies; and, it must be added, everywhere find a home and a supply of the necessaries of life. One of the most pleasing traits in the Jewish character is the hospitality with which they treat all strangers of their nation, but particularly wandering students.

These poorer savants are provided for in various ways. Some get rich wives, as, amongst the Rabbinical Jews, learning ranks higher than wealth; and every father desires to have a learned and, as he thinks, *therefore*, a pious husband for his daughter. Others become

Melammedim, readers in the Synagogue, Shochet, or slaughterer; for this is a learned profession amongst the Jews. A slaughterer must be perfectly conversant with all the circumstances which make a beast clean or unclean. For this purpose, he must study the treatises on the Sh'chitah, which contain minute details as to comparative anatomy; nor can he exercise his art until he has been examined by a Rabbi, and has obtained a certificate of his competency. Rabbi, Melammed, Reader, and Shochet, are the learned professions amongst the Rabbinic Jews; and the existence of these offices has in every age ensured a large number of educated men amongst them. Amongst the Jews, as well as amongst every other people, the ministers of religion have been the preservers of learning. Without them they must soon have sunk into absolute barbarism. The preservation of learning without religion is impossible. Wherever there are Jewish families, they must have a Shochet, or dispense altogether with animal food, as they dare not eat the meat slaughtered by a Gentile; and, as the Jews are greatly scattered, it follows of course that the number of Shochtim is very great. In small con-

gregations, they also act as reader in the Synagogue, and Rabbi. They must then possess a higher degree of learning, as the business of the Rabbi is not only to give instruction, but, with the assistance of two assessors, called judges, to settle disputes, to transact the business attendant on divorces, which are of frequent occurrence, and especially to solve cases of conscience, which are very numerous on account of the intricacy of the Rabbinic laws concerning clean and unclean food, &c.

The mere religious necessities of the people perpetuate a certain number of learned men. But, as learning is looked upon as the most meritorious of all acts, and is, according to the Rabbinical axiom, "equal to the fulfilment of all the other commandments," it is not confined to the officials of the Synagogue. Many of the Jewish shopkeepers and trades-people possess a highly respectable degree of Jewish learning, and are quite at home on the subject of the controversy with Christians. Many more leave the management of the shop and all worldly business to their wives, and devote themselves exclusively to study. Many Christians will be ready to say, that all this

study and diligence is much ado about nothing. The absurdities and superstitions of Rabbinism are better known than its real genius and spirit. The truth is, that, amidst all its follies and absurdities, Rabbinism possesses as many monuments of genius and intellect as any other system whatever. The Rabbinical writings are also well calculated to train and exercise the understanding. The mere circumstance that they all exist in Hebrew or Chaldee accustoms the Jewish mind at once to a learned language, and necessarily forces upon it some idea of philology. The Talmud, which may be looked upon as a vast congest of canon law, abounding with the most subtle distinctions and disputations, sharpens the intellect to the utmost. The study of the Talmud has the same effect that the study of law generally has. But the Talmud does not monopolize the Jewish mind. Many devote themselves to the commentaries on the Scriptures, particularly to Jarchi, Aben-Ezra, and Kimchi. Any one who has ever looked into Rosenmüller's "Scholia" will see that these men are not to be despised; that, on the contrary, for acuteness and accurate knowledge of the Hebrew text, they have never been

surpassed. Aben-Ezra's and Kimchi's "Exposition of the Psalms" often breathe a genuine devotional spirit. Even when they are in the wrong, as they often are, they are sure to instruct. Jarchi's "Commentary on the Song of Solomon," when compared with the attempts of modern German divines, exhibits Jewish good sense and piety in the most favourable point of view. Others read Nachmanides, Bechai, Alshech, Abarbanel, &c. Abarbanel appears at once as a man of first-rate intellect; and though a bitter enemy of Christianity, it is not possible to read a page of his commentaries without being struck with the perspicuity of his style, and the comprehensive range of his mind. Even a partial acquaintance with these authors is sufficient to inspire the most prejudiced with a profound respect for the Jewish nation on account of their intense industry, profound Hebrew learning, and great talents. Other Jews again devote themselves to the Midrashim, Jalkut, Sohar, and the Kabbala. The readers of Maimonides form a class or school by themselves. They have generally a metaphysical and rationalist turn of mind. And, if they cannot be called Rabbinic free-thinkers, they do certainly think

more freely than most of their brethren, and are passionately fond of the words, philosopher and philosophy.

These are the usual channels into which Jewish thought is directed:—The Talmud and its compendiums, or Jewish canon law, which comprises a certain portion of the principles of political economy, ethics, and enough of astronomy to regulate their feasts and calendar, which depend upon the moon. Kabbala, or Theosophy. The commentaries on the Scripture, which include philology, some portion of physics, in order to explain the Mosaic account of creation, history, and chronology. Logics and metaphysics are found more or less in all, but particularly in the writings of Maimonides. Nor are the Jews of the present day students only. The Jewish printing-presses at Slawuta, Wilna, Lublin, Warsaw, and Cracow, send forth a number of new works every year. Indeed, whether we look at the Rabbinic Jews of ancient or modern times, we must admit that they are a people of no mean intellectual power. Let any one reflect on the Jewish history, and let him remember that, for nearly 1,800 years, they have been an outcast, wandering, persecuted, and oppressed people, and he will find it little short of a miracle

that the Jews should have any literature at all. But, when he looks at the extent of that literature, its variety, and the noble monuments of industry, genius, and intellect which it comprises, he must admit that there is, in the conformation of the Jewish mind, an innate love of learning, a native nobility, an irresistible elasticity of intellect, which has enabled them to bear up against the pressure of calamity and contempt which threatened to overwhelm them. Titus destroyed their city and temple, and Adrian put an end to every hope of political restoration; but neither could destroy the Jewish love of learning, because it was inseparably connected with their religious wants. The homeless captives soon had flourishing schools of learning. The names of Jamnia and Tiberias, Nahardea, Sora, and Pumbeditha, still attest the power of the Jewish mind. The history of the Jews proves incontrovertibly, that, as long as a nation retains a love for its religion, even though that religion have a considerable admixture of error, it can never sink into barbarism. The body may be led into captivity, but the power of religion will still preserve the mind unconquered and free.

II.

THE CHASIDIM, A FANATICAL JEWISH SECT.

THE long-continued unbelief of the Jews might furnish a plausible argument against the truth of Christianity, if they appeared in their history as a sober-minded people, never moved except by weight of evidence, which they had carefully examined. But this is not the case. Their whole history shews that, with all their shrewdness in worldly dealing, and all their genius and acuteness in scholastic argumentation, they are a credulous and superstitious people in the highest degree. The delusions of their false Messiahs, in past ages, are well known. But the modern history of the Jews has attracted but little attention; and few persons are acquainted with the fact, that there is at this present moment, amongst the Rabbinical Jews, a numerous and powerful sect, whose fanaticism almost exceeds the bounds of belief. In Poland, the cradle and chief seat of this sect, the attention is soon attracted by a class of Jews whose dress bespeaks a studied sloven-

liness, and whose features express a ferocious wildness, in some cases almost indicative of insanity. These are the *Chasidim*, or Saints, as they call themselves. The name of the founder was Rabbi Israel, with the epithet *Baal Shem*, "possessor of the name," that is, the mysterious name of God, which enables him that knows it to work miracles, and to attain the knowledge of all mysteries. Rabbi Israel's real history is enveloped in utter obscurity. The orthodox Rabbies say that he was an ambitious man, of mean talents, and no acquirements; and that, as he could not distinguish himself by learning, he took the shorter and easier road to fame and power, by pretending to superior sanctity and a more profound knowledge of mysteries. His followers, on the contrary, as we shall see hereafter, describe him as a prodigy of learning and piety from his very childhood. All that is certain is, that he appeared about the year 1740, at first in Hussti, and afterwards at Medziboze, in Podolia, as the head of a small sect, which he had previously collected in privacy. He was most probably a man of devotional and enthusiastic spirit, who felt the insufficiency and lifelessness of Rabbinism, and thought he

had discovered the essence of true piety in the mysticism of the Cabbalistic system. This natural turn of his mind led him to this study, as he hoped thereby to attain an intimate union with God, which his followers still regard as the acme of piety, and the one great object of all their fastings, ablutions, and prayers. Whether he himself laid claim to supernatural powers cannot now be ascertained, but, as the Rabbinical Jews generally believe that an intimate knowledge of Cabbala bestows them, and enables the soul to roam at large amidst the worlds of angels and separate spirits, it is probable that he did at least pretend to the same sort of intercourse with the other world which Swedenborg believed himself to possess. However that may be, his fame soon spread, in spite of the most determined opposition on the part of the Rabbies; and in a very short time his followers were numbered by tens of thousands. As long as he lived, the sect formed one great whole, of which he was the head. After his death, which happened in 1760, it was divided into separate congregations, each of which had its own Rabbi, or, as the Chasidim call him,

Tsaddik, or righteous man; the most distinguished of whom were R. Israel's grandchildren. The death of the founder in no wise retarded the progress of the sect. His successors went through all Poland, teaching the new religion; and as they far surpassed the other Jews in fasting and daily ablutions, and the other external signs of Rabbinic piety, they everywhere found followers. There was nothing to shock the prejudices of the people, but everything to attract them. They appeared as possessors and teachers of the Cabbala, the most revered part of Judaism; and they naturally found crowds ready to receive what they promised to impart. Dr. Jost, a learned reformed Jew, says,* that Chasidism is the religion of nine-tenths of the Jews in Galicia, South Hungary, West and South Russia, and Wallachia. He might also have added, that it has extended to the East, and has followers in Jerusalem and Safet, and two synagogues in Constantinople. Though in reality they differ but little from the other Rabbinical Jews, there exists between them a complete wall of separation. The Chasidim have sepa-

* Geschichte der Israeliten, vol. ix. p. 160.

rate synagogues, use the prayer-book of the Spanish Jews, which is more Cabbalistic, and have their own Rabbies. They reverence the Talmud less, and the Sohar more, than the other Jews, and especially profess to strive after a perfect union with God, as their great object. To effect this, they spend much time in contemplation; and, in prayer, use the most extraordinary contortions and gestures, jumping, writhing, howling, in order to exalt their mind, and do certainly succeed in working themselves into a state little short of phrensy. Before their devotions, they indulge freely in the use of mead and even of ardent spirits, to promote cheerfulness, as they regard sorrow and anxiety as peculiar hinderances to the enjoyment of union with God. Their chief means of edification is the spending the Sabbath-day with the Tsaddik. On Friday afternoon and evening, before the approach of the Jewish Sabbath, waggon-loads of Jews and Jewesses, with their children, pour in from all the neighbourhood, from a distance of thirty, forty, or more miles. The rich bring presents and their own provisions, of which the poor are permitted to partake. The chief entertainment

is Saturday afternoon, at the meal which the Jews call the third meal,* during which the Tsaddik sagt Torah, that is, he extemporises a sort of moral-mystical-cabbalistical discourse, which his followers receive as the dictates of immediate inspiration. For the benefit of those who are too far removed to come on the Saturday, the Tsaddik makes journeys through his district, when he lodges with some rich member of the sect, and is treated with all the respect due to one who stands in immediate communication with Deity. He then imposes penances on those whose consciences are burdened with guilt; dispenses amulets and slips of parchment with cabbalistic sentences written on them to those who wish exemption from sickness and danger, or protection against the assaults of evil spirits; and pronounces on the sick and the barren his benediction, which is supposed to remove all infirmities, and to procure the fulfilment of every wish. The writer of this notice once

* The Jews are bound on the Sabbath to have three meals—the first on Friday night, the second when they come from the synagogue on Saturday morning, and the third on Saturday afternoon.

saw one of the most famous of these Tsaddikim, the Tsaddik of Medziboze, or Mezbesh, during one of these periodical visits to a large congregation in Russian Poland. His antechamber was crowded with Jews and Jewesses, anxiously waiting for admission. The Tsaddik himself was seated in an inner chamber, in an arm-chair. He wore a long robe, something like a cassock, of sky-blue silk, a white girdle and cap. He was a fine-looking, portly old man, with a long white beard. His attendants all stood around him, attired in the usual costume of the Polish Jews, excepting the cap, which was not black velvet, but white cotton. His conversation was that of a shrewd, sensible man; and with us he certainly shewed nothing either of the mystic or fanatic. The Jews said, at his departure, that his receipts in this town alone were 2,000 silver rubles, or about 330*l*. Another of the most famous Tsaddikim of our times was the Tsaddik of Kishanoff, in the kingdom of Poland, now some years dead. His fame for healing the sick and working miracles extended far and wide. He was in consequence visited by multitudes of Jews, and, as they say, by not a few Christians, who experienced the

beneficial effects of his supernatural power. A very few years since his grave was still visited as a means of help in all sorts of trouble. But perhaps the most satisfactory way of exhibiting the genius and creed of this sect is to give extracts from their own writings. Their excessive credulity may be seen in their history of R. Israel, as published by themselves, of which I will translate a few passages, from an original copy, prefixing some of their religious tenets, as given by Dr. Jost, in the place quoted above* :—

“A man should have no other will but the will of God. Every man should look upon himself as the object for which the world is created. Do good, without looking to any other reward than that of finding new opportunities of fulfilling your duties. Fly from worldly honour. Receive insults in silence. Faith and truth are inseparable. Pride is idolatry. Cheerfulness in suffering, and obedience from a principle of love, unite us with God. Covetousness must be annihilated. The visit of many to the Tsaddik should

* He quotes from the Kitsur Likkute Moharan of R. Nachman, grandson of R. Israel, and the Sepher Hammidoth of R. Nathan, a disciple of the former.

surround and unite all with love, and strengthen them in the service of the Most High. Pursue worldly business only for the sake of the soul. The difference between life and death exists in the case of worldly men; but the pious man, who triumphs over the wants of the body, even then, when no duty compels him, lives always, and experiences no difference between life and death. Sadness and sloth arise from want of faith. He that is firm in faith is hurt by nothing; he fears no man, he regards no obstacle, but does his duty in the service of God. Faith in the wise men, that their words and deeds are not to be understood as they appear, but contain mysteries, entitles to salvation. *The most important of all principles is unreserved devotion to the Tsaddik; never to turn aside from his precepts; to reject wisdom and science, yea, one's own understanding, and to receive only what the Tsaddik says. Even when one thinks that the Tsaddik is acting contrary to the law, he is still to believe that the Tsaddik is in the right; he must therefore reject his own understanding, and rest confidently on that of the Rabbi.* It is a duty to get away as far as possible from philosophy, for through philosophy many bring themselves and others

to sin. Natural philosophers shew that all things happen according to the course of nature; but they are wild beasts, who tread down many of our people. Their souls are like birds caught in a net: let every cautious person beware. To read books of this kind, even when written by learned Israelites, is forbidden, for there is no evil greater. When there is a difference of opinion in heaven, it is settled according to the opinion of the Tsaddik. When any one is judged above, the judgment refers only to his name; the messengers of death sometimes mistake this, and thus kill somebody else through inadvertence. God often sends misfortune to a man, that he may go to the Tsaddik and get him to pray for him. He that is in grief, let him give presents continually to the Tsaddik. They that travel to the Tsaddik acquire a large portion of merit by that very act, even though they learn nothing from him."

This specimen of their tenets may serve to shew the implicit faith which the Chasidim place in their leaders, and the general tendency of their opinions. The extent of their credulity will appear from the following extracts from

a quarto pamphlet, in the Polish Jewish dialect, entitled, "The Praises of Israel Baal Shem Tov," printed in 1817, without the name either of place or printer* :—

"The father of Baal Shem, R. Eliezer, lived on the frontiers of Wallachia, whence he was carried away by robbers to a distant land, where he was sold as a slave to one of the King's ministers. The King was then engaged in a war that threatened the destruction of the kingdom, when suddenly the means of averting the calamity were revealed to R. Eliezer in a dream. A second dream raised him to a dignity equal to that which Joseph enjoyed in Egypt, and he received the King's daughter in marriage. His piety prevented him from living with this Gentile woman: he, however, revealed to her his history and religion, which was altogether forbidden in that land, and she assisted him in escaping with great riches. On his road home, he was robbed of all he had, but was comforted by the appearance of the prophet Elijah, who said, Because of thy great merits thou art found worthy to have a son, who will enlighten

* Most probably in some place where the opponents of the Chasidim had most influence at the Censor's office.

the eyes of Israel, and in him will be fulfilled the verse, 'Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.' (Isaiah xlix. 3.) On his return home, R. Eliezer found his wife, and in their old age, for they were both one hundred years old, Israel Baal Shem Tov was born. The child grew and was weaned; and when the time of the father's death drew near, he took him in his arms, and said, 'I see that thou wilt shine as a great light: remember, therefore, all thy life long, that God, blessed be He, is with thee, and as He is with thee, be afraid of nothing.' After his father's death, the town's-people, out of respect for him, took care of the child, and engaged for him a melammed or tutor. His talents were great, and he made rapid progress. But as he was in the habit of studying only a few days at a time, and then ran away into a wood to enjoy private study and prayer, the people thought him a hopeless youth, and withdrew their support. Poor Israel was then obliged to accept a situation as belfer or helper in a school. His business was to call for the children at their homes, and to convey them to school, and to repeat with them certain

prayers. When he sung the words, and concluded with the Amen, his voice pierced the heavens, for it was such a song as the Levites used to sing in the Temple, and in heaven it was a time of great favour and acceptance. Satan observed this, and fearful of the consequences, determined to stop this devotion. For this purpose he changed himself into a wild beast called a wohl-klak,* and when Israel was conducting the children to school, he so terrified them, that they were afraid to go any more, and thus the praying and singing were interrupted. Israel then remembered the dying command of his father, to be afraid of nothing; and went about begging the parents to entrust the children to him, for that he would protect them. The parents were persuaded, and Baal Shem again set out with his charge. The beast again made his appearance, but Baal Shem, with one blow of his staff, laid him lifeless at his feet. After this, Baal Shem became a *shomer*, or watcher, in the Beth Hammedrash (house of learning), and, to all appearance,

* This word is neither German nor Hebrew. The nearest word that I can find is Warchlak—in Polish, a wild boar.

neglected his studies. His custom was to sleep whilst others studied, and when the others slept he spent that time in diligent study and prayer.

“ At this time there lived a Rabbi of great learning and piety; his name was R. Adam (where he lived we are not told), who possessed certain mysterious manuscripts which he had found in a cave, and from which he had learned the great secrets of the law, and the names of God. It appears that though he lived in great poverty in this world, that he might be rich in the world to come, he had, notwithstanding, by virtue of his mysterious knowledge, great influence with the Emperor (which Emperor we are not told, but suppose the Emperor of Austria). He once asked the Emperor to come and dine with him, and the Emperor accepted the invitation, to the no small surprise of the court. On the appointed day the Emperor set out for the little town where R. Adam resided, attended by a numerous suite of counts and princes, who used all their eloquence in dissuading the Emperor from proceeding, because, as they said, R. Adam lived in a small house, and had no place to receive the Imperial court.

The Emperor, it seems, was better instructed as to R. Adam's capabilities, for he turned a deaf ear to all their insinuations. When near the place, his Majesty sent forward a courier to see whether the due preparations had been made, but he returned with the news that R. Adam's cottage looked just as usual. The nobles again entreated the Emperor to return, but he persevered in his intention; and, when they arrived, they were astonished at the sight of one of the most splendid palaces that the eye ever beheld. The Emperor and the court were entertained with a magnificence worthy of royalty, and dismissed with presents. R. Adam had requested of each to express a wish, and then put his hand into his pocket, where the object of his desires was found safely lodged. To have a clue to this mystery, the Emperor took with him two golden cups from the sideboard, which he kept until the intelligence reached him that the palace of a neighbouring king had disappeared for a season, and had as unexpectedly returned. After such a display of power, no one can doubt that the manuscripts were of rare value, or that R. Israel Baal Shem Tov was the worthy heir of such a treasure. On his death-bed, R. Adam com-

manded his only son to go to the town of Okkiff, and search for a youth named Israel, for that the manuscripts belonged to him and to his soul. The son set forth, and with great difficulty discovered Israel. He engaged him first as his servant, and having ascertained by various trials that this was *the* Israel, he delivered the manuscripts, and thought himself highly honoured in being permitted to study with this wonderful personage. Israel now advanced rapidly in all mysteries, many of which he communicated to R. Adam's son, on condition that he never would reveal the history of the manuscripts or their contents to living soul. His fellow-student was, however, not satisfied with the information thus obtained: he besought Baal Shem to bring down the angel who is called the Prince of the Law, as he could reveal mysteries still more profound. After much hesitation, and often refusing, Baal Shem at length consented. They fasted and bathed themselves every day for eight days, and on the appointed evening the angel was summoned to descend. But hardly had the summons gone forth, when Baal Shem broke out into the most bitter lamentations—'Alas ! alas ! there has been

some mistake; for I see not the Prince of the Law, but the Prince of Fire, about to descend and to burn the town. Run home and save your father-in-law and family.' Down the Prince of Fire accordingly came, and the town was burnt, but Baal Shem and his friends escaped. The sad result of this attempt by no means cooled the curiosity of R. Adam's son. Baal Shem was again persuaded. The fasting and bathing were again gone through; the summons was renewed, and Baal Shem again cried out in agony, 'Woe is me! there has been a mistake. It is the Prince of the Pestilence that is coming. The sentence of death is gone forth against us both, unless we spend the night in watching and study.' They opened their books in all haste, and read with diligence. But soon after midnight, R. Adam's son was overcome with sleep. Baal Shem tried in vain to keep him awake: sleep prevailed; and the Prince of the Pestilence executed his commission. R. Adam's son died. Baal Shem now removed to a small town near Brody, in Galicia. He subsequently married, and for many years lived privately in a village, devoting all his time to study and prayer,

and carefully concealing his supernatural powers. He now and then wrought a miracle to extricate himself or his wife from a difficulty, or to help a friend. And sometimes Jews on a visit with him, if they happened to wake in the night, were alarmed at seeing the room full of fire; but when they got up to escape, found that it was only a supernatural glory which surrounded Baal Shem at his midnight studies. Such persons were, however, always sworn to keep his secret until the time of his public career should arrive. Israel at length attained the destined age of thirty-six, and then publicly appeared as a Baal Shem, or possessor of the sacred name, and took up his abode permanently at Medziboze, or, as the Jews pronounce it, Mezbesh."

The above is an abstract of the history contained in the first six leaves. The remainder of the book is a mere collection of anecdotes and fables, utterly destitute of the appearance of probability, and in many cases devoid even of the marvellous; as, for instance, that several persons, on their deathbed, requested Baal Shem to pray for them; that he refused, and that they died in consequence.

One or two may be admitted for the purpose of throwing light on the opinions of the sect, and their state of mind:—

“I have heard,” says the author, “from the great Rabbi of the holy congregation of Meseritz, that once, on the day of atonement, Baal Shem was late in coming to prayer, and the people waited for him a long time. At length he came, sat down in his own seat, and laid his head upon the desk. After lifting up his head several times, he made signs to begin prayer. The celebrated R. David stepped forward, for he always read prayers on solemn occasions. But no sooner had he reached the amrud, or reading-desk, than Baal Shem began to pour forth upon him a torrent of abuse, which he continued for half an hour, putting him to shame in the presence of all the people. R. David, afraid that Baal Shem saw some sin upon him, began to retreat, but was stopt by a loud cry from Baal Shem, commanding him to stand still and pray. He commenced the prayers with weeping and sobbing, and hardly knew what he was about, for his heart was well nigh broken. When the day of atonement was over, R. David went to Baal Shem, and asked him what

wickedness he had seen on him, thus to shame him before the congregation? 'I saw no wickedness,' replied Baal Shem, 'but I perceived Sammael, the accuser, in the path by which the prayers ascend to heaven: therefore I delayed the prayers until I could find out another road for them: but I was afraid lest there should be any vain thoughts in you, and on that account I wounded your heart to keep away all strange imaginations.'—Fol. 6, col. 4.

“On another occasion, on the eve of the day of atonement, there was a great accusation (in heaven) against Israel, the object of which was to take away the oral law. Baal Shem went about the entire day in great agitation. In the evening, when the whole town went to him to receive his benediction, he blessed only one or two, so great was his sorrow. He then went into the synagogue, leaned into the ark of the covenant, and spoke words of reproof, crying out, ‘What shall we do if they take away from us the holy law? We shall not be able to exist among the nations for half a day.’ He was particularly severe against the Rabbies who teach false doctrines. He afterwards went into the Beth Hammedrash,

and said the prayer beginning, 'Kol nidre.' But the accuser grew more violent; and Baal Shem hurried all the men of prayer to make haste with their prayers, that he might be able to begin the prayer called 'N'ilah' in good time. Before this prayer he again exhorted the people to repentance, and wept. He then laid down his head upon the reading-desk, and sobbed and cried aloud, and then began to pray with a loud voice. His custom was not to look into the book. R. Yenkel from Mezbesh, repeated the words first, and he answered. R. Yenkel began as usual. He said the words once: he said them again; but as Baal Shem answered not, he stood silent. Baal Shem then began to make the most wonderful movements, and bowed down his head even to his feet. The congregation feared every moment lest he should fall, and yet they were also afraid to lay hold of him. They therefore made known the matter to R. Wolf Kotzis. He came, and, looking into Baal Shem's face, made signs that no one should touch him, for his eyes were turned, and he uttered sounds like a wounded ox. This lasted for two hours, after which he stood upright in his place, and soon finished the

prayer. As soon as the day of atonement was over, all the people went to Baal Shem to pay their respects, and to ask what was the end of the accusation. He related to them how, during the prayer 'N'ilah,' he went from world to world without delay, until he arrived at the sanctuary, from which place, said he, 'I had only one gate to pass, in order to come to the Name Blessed-be-He. In the sanctuary I found prayers which had been waiting for the last fifty years, and had found no entrance. But to-day, by means of our great devotion, all these prayers were admitted, and shone as bright as the morning star. I said to the prayers, Why do you wait here all this time? They replied, We had orders to wait for you to be our guide. I said, Come along, for the gate was open (now the gate was as big as the whole world); but when we approached, an angel came and locked it; the lock was as large as the whole town of Mezbesch. I tried to open the lock, but was not able. I then ran to my Rabbi, the author of the book "Toldoth Jakob Joseph," and said to him, Israel is now in great trouble, and I am not permitted to enter: at another time I should not insist upon entering, but now it is necessary.

My Rabbi said, I will go with you, and if it be possible, they will certainly open the gate. But when he came, he could do nothing with the lock. I began to weep and cry before the Rabbi, and to say, Will you forsake me in the time of trouble? He said, I can do nothing more; but come, let us go to the sanctuary of Messiah,—perhaps we shall find help there. When Messiah Righteousness saw me yet afar off, he said, Cry not, and gave me two letters,* with which I went back to the gate, and by the help of God, it opened. I then introduced all the prayers; and as soon as ever the prayers entered, the accuser held his peace, the decree was changed, and nothing but a note of it remained. There was, however, a great commotion in the world. Many had sent away their books to the province of Wallachia; for the accuser was of the sect of Sabbathi Tsevi (may their name be blotted out!), and the Bishop of Kaminietz had burnt two copies of the Talmud, one of which he had taken from a Jew by force, and laid upon the fire. This Bishop did not go unpunished: he was so injured by the fire, that he died on the road home. Afterwards there was a public

* Cabbalistic letters of the Alphabet.

disputation in Lemberg, before the Bishop there, but he was struck with terror, and did not condemn the law. On the contrary, the whole of the wicked sect were shmadded* (baptized), for the Bishop commanded them to shave off half their hair and beard, to shew that they were neither Jews nor aliens. To avoid this disgrace, they consented to be shmadded. Thus may all the wicked of the earth perish !”

This last story is highly characteristic of the Chasidim. To this day they are still engaged with the world of spirits, either bringing down blessings or averting judgments. It also illustrates the general character of their miracles, which mostly rest upon the testimony of him who works them, and are not submitted to the scrutiny of the senses. The groundwork of the above story is found in the history of the celebrated Frank, a contemporary of Israel Baal Shem, and the pretended prophet of Sabbathi Tsevi, who settled in Podolia about the year 1757. He was really a man of great

* Shamad is a Hebrew word, signifying to *destroy*, which the Jews use for baptism, as they look upon baptism and destruction as synonymous.

Cabbalistic learning; and, as he professed faith in the Trinity, and drew up a creed in many points agreeing with Christianity, he obtained the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kaminietz, whose attempt to destroy the Talmud is ascribed to his influence. The death of his patron, and the intrigues of the hostile Jews, led to the public disputation in Lemberg, of which a most marvellous account is given in another Chasid book, entitled, "The Book of the Dreadful History." The opposers of Frank triumphed; and Frank and his followers were really baptized, and formed a sort of judaizing Christian sect, still known by the denomination of Frankists. The Chasidim ascribe the death of the Bishop and the baptism of Frank to the prayers of Baal Shem. Their own sect, however, is now also on the wane. Within the last ten years several of their greatest Rabbies have died, and the survivors, it is said, have lost much of their influence, as they promised to reverse a decree, relative to military service, which the Russian Government issued some years ago, but were utterly unsuccessful. The decree was executed, and

the Tsaddikim lost their credit. It is, however, much to be feared that the transition from fanaticism will be to Infidelity, unless proper means be used to lead them to the truth.

III.

MOSES MENDELSON AND JEWISH REFORM.

MOSES MENDELSON, when spoken of in connexion with the reformed Jews, must be considered in his character of Reformer. As a literary man, his name is well known. He was one of those remarkable persons whose intellectual energy enables them to attain to eminence in spite of poverty, unfavourable circumstances, and infirm bodily constitution. Educated a Rabbinical Jew, he had to overcome his own prejudices and those of Christians. But he gradually triumphed over all difficulties, and was at last acknowledged both by Jews and Christians to be, in some respects, one of the first of his contemporaries. The Jews may, therefore, apply to him the words in which they eulogize Moses Maimonides, "that from Moses to Moses there arose not like unto Moses." But Mendelson is to be considered not only as a genius, but as a Reformer. His brilliant career could not be

uninfluential on his brethren. He shewed them that there was other knowledge besides that of the Talmud well worthy of their acquisition, and that a Jew, notwithstanding all the unjust prejudices against the nation, could attain and maintain high literary fame in the Christian learned world. The fact that his most celebrated works were written in German, and in such German as to call forth the admiration and applause of Lessing, and other celebrated German writers of the day, naturally turned the attention of his brethren to that language. Before his time, German was regarded by the Jews as a Gentile, and therefore a profane, language. Hebrew was the language of the learned, and Jewish the vernacular dialect of the great majority. Mendelsohn's translation of the Pentateuch and the Psalms, though printed in Jewish characters, introduced a purer dialect, and accustomed the youth to the diction and construction of pure German. His other works allured them to learn the German character, and then taught them to value European literature, which their countryman prized so highly, and cultivated with such success. Of course, there were many other Jews besides

Mendelsohn, who were literary and scientific men, but I speak of the nation. This one circumstance—the introduction of German, and a taste for general literature—was sufficient to produce a mighty change amongst the Jews. In fact it was itself a revolution. An old-fashioned Rabbinical Jew in Poland still looks with horror upon the acquisition of *Galchas Taitsch*.^{*} And a Jew who reads epikorsische Bücher (epicurean books), as Christian books are called, runs a risk of losing his character. The fact that Moses Mendelsohn broke down this one prejudice, shews incontrovertibly the weight of his character, and the powerful influence which he exercised over the Jewish mind. The Jews read German, loved German literature, and learned to esteem German authors. From that moment the Rabbinic spell was broken. Parents wished to see their children little Mendelsohns; for this, German was necessary. The study of German and profane literature was, therefore, preferred to Rabbinical writings. German history, poetry, philosophy, and romances were vastly more

^{*} The Jews call a Popish priest, from his tonsure, *Gallach*; and pure German, *Galchas Taitsch*, or priest's German.

agreeable to the youthful mind than the scholastic disputations of the Talmud and the Rabbies. Rashi and Kimchi, the Shulchan Aruch and Tosaphoth, were laid on the shelf. Schiller and Wieland, Wolf and Kant, were the favourite books of the holy nation, the kingdom of priests, the sons of Abraham.

But Mendelsohn was not a Reformer simply by influence. He was one also by intention. Such, at least, is the opinion of his brethren. Dr. Jost* says:—

“We place Mendelsohn, notwithstanding his strict Rabbinical observances, amongst the opposers of Rabbinism. Although the most zealous Rabbies have not been able to detect, in his Hebrew writings, the spirit of departure, we believe that we are fully justified in directly considering him as the author of the opposing system. We go even farther, and assert that this opposition was not a fortuitous result of his writings, and their application to the instruction of youth; but that he was himself conscious of his purpose, and directed his activity to the object of giving to the Jewish religion another foundation from that which it was supposed to have—to spiritualize, to raise

* Vol. ix. p. 65.

it,—and with it to deliver his co-religionists from darkness, and to dispel a cloud of prejudices.”

This opinion is confirmed by extracts from Mendelsohn's writings. Two of his sentiments are directly opposed to the whole Rabbinic system. The one, that the right of excommunication or exclusion is contrary to the prime object of a religious community. “Every other society,” says he, “has the right of exclusion, but not so an ecclesiastical community, for this right is contrary to the great end of its existence.” This principle, of course, annihilates the Rabbinic power of discipline. His idea of the nature of religion as effectually destroyed their spiritual influence over the mind.

“I believe,” says he in another place, “that Judaism knows nothing of a revealed religion in the sense in which this is understood by Christians. The Israelites have a Divine legislation. Laws, precepts, commands, rules of life, instruction in the will of God, teaching us how to conduct ourselves in order to attain temporal and eternal happiness, were revealed to them by Moses, in a wonderful and supernatural manner; but no dogmas, no saving

truths, no general propositions. These the Eternal always reveals to us, as to all other men, through *nature* and *fact*—not by word or writing. Judaism acknowledges not in the miracles, proofs of eternal truths. The truths contained in the Scriptures do not force themselves upon the faith; they appear, as it were, as a matter of course, in their naturalness, and are sooner or later (not believed, but) known by every inquirer. Ancient Judaism has no articles of faith.”

These words, though addressed to Lavater, plainly exhibit Mendelsohn's mind, and contain principles directly subversive of the Rabbinic fabric. If Judaism has no articles of faith, there is of course no obligation to receive any dogmas, much less to believe all the dicta of the Rabbies. If the Jewish community has no right to exercise discipline, there is of course no punishment for the non-observance of the laws, precepts, and commands, in which he supposes the essence of Judaism to consist. Mendelsohn's idea of reform was the disruption of Rabbinic fetters, and philosophic liberty of thought. He was himself styled the Jewish philosopher, and his highest idea was to raise his countrymen to the same standard. This

was the natural consequence of the mode in which his mind had been developed. Whilst a youth, the *Moreh Nevuchim* of Maimonides, the father of the Rationalists, was his favourite book. He thence imbibed his leading (and most detestable) principle, that no dogmatic truth is to be believed on the evidence of Revelation, nor in fact upon any evidence, except that of abstract ratiocination. The study of the ancient Greek, and the modern French, philosophers, and familiar intercourse with Lessing, Abt, and Nicolai, completed his system. Outwardly he was a strict Rabbinical Jew—inwardly, a Gentile philosopher. That he was the author of a great change, intellectual and civil, cannot be denied. That he was a Reformer may well be doubted. When a Protestant speaks of a religious reform, he involuntarily thinks of Elijah and other Jewish worthies, who boldly stood forward, determined to assert the truth, to bring their countrymen to the service and favour of God, or to perish in the attempt. The mention of religious reform recalls to our minds, at the very least, the heroes of the sixteenth century, who entered into the fearful struggle with all the pomp and power

of Popery, and won for their fellow-men, the free and full possession of the Word of God. Mendelsohn bears little or no resemblance to the mighty men of his own people, nor those of the Christian Church. Though a Jew, he drank chiefly at Gentile sources. Luther, a Gentile, drew from the Jewish fountains of salvation. Mendelsohn endeavoured to tread in the steps of Aristotle and Plato. Luther was a follower of Moses and the prophets. Mendelsohn inspired his nation with a love of philosophy and polite literature. Luther kindled a flame of zeal and love for the truth of God's Word.—In a word, Mendelsohn communicated Gentile civilization; Luther preached the faith of Abraham.

But though Mendelsohn is justly considered as the head of the reform party, he was not the sole agent. He lived at the beginning of the great *mouvement*; and he and his nation necessarily felt the force of that power which has already shaken, and still threatens the desolation of, the moral world. The Jewish nation had then, as it has ever had, a multitude of speculative minds, of no mean calibre, and of uncommon energy. Once delivered from Rabbinic bonds, and brought within

the sphere of the new impulse, they moved along with an accelerated velocity. Amongst these, one of the most remarkable was Hartwig Wessely, or, according to his Jewish name, Hertz Wesel, who was born in 1725, and died in 1805. He was, like Mendelsohn, originally a Rabbinic Jew, and observed the traditional law to the last. His thirst for knowledge led him to acquire the German, French, Danish, and Dutch languages, and to study mathematics, natural philosophy, geography, and history. An extraordinary power of writing Hebrew, both prose and poetry, secured the esteem of his nation, and gave him an opportunity of communicating his acquirements in a national, and therefore an unsuspected, form. The edict of the Emperor Joseph II., to establish elementary schools amongst the Jews, first exhibited Wessely as a Reformer. He wrote a letter to the congregation at Trieste upon the subject, in which he stated the importance of elementary instruction, recommended the study of Hebrew grammar, and advised the postponing of the Talmudic studies to a riper age. This brought down upon him all the weight of Rabbinic indignation. The

Rabbies, who consider the Talmud as the book of books, were scandalized at the suspicion that it was unfit for the instruction of youth. He was, therefore, attacked on all sides, and the rudeness of the assault made him, in principle, a determined Anti-rabbinist. It is remarkable that Wessely spent the first fifty years of his life in mercantile pursuits. At first, he was a book-keeper,—then manager of a great mercantile establishment,—and in the latter portion of his life, in poverty, and yet the power of his mind rose above all. He found time and strength to write a series of works, which form a new era in Hebrew composition, and have united his name with that of Mendelsohn's in the honourable appellation of the "two restorers of science amongst the Jews." Jost's description of the effects of their labours is very striking. He says, "They found the Jews without any language: they gave them two at once—the German and the Hebrew."

Amongst these early reformers, David Friedländer, a Jewish merchant, holds a distinguished place. Like most of his countrymen, he found literature and study compatible with worldly business, and was thoroughly

devoted to the promotion of what he considered the welfare of his nation. He was one of the first who translated the Jewish liturgy into German, and successfully combated the prejudices that then existed against such an undertaking. But he was not merely an author; he endeavoured to realize his ideas of reform. His house and his purse were alike open to the wants of his countrymen. He assisted promising Jewish youths in their studies, encouraged them by his patronage, and endeavoured to form them by admission to his select circle of literary friends. By his own liberality, and that of other like-minded Jews, an elementary free-school was established at Berlin, of which he took the active superintendence, and which flourished under his care.

The new ideas soon spread, and, in 1783, a society of learned Jews was formed at Königsberg. They projected and undertook the publication of the first periodical that ever appeared amongst the Jews. It was entitled, "Measseph, the Gatherer," and at once opened a new field for the exhibition of Jewish talent, and an organ for spreading the new opinions. It received articles upon the abuses of Judaism,

plans for reform, essays on literature, poems, and translations, and exerted no small influence upon the nation. These attempts at reform were much assisted by the appearance of several extraordinary men amongst the Jews, in various parts of the world. Perreira, a Portuguese Jew, attained to great celebrity as interpreter at the King's library, in Paris, and deserves the thanks of mankind, as being the first who successfully attempted the instruction of the deaf and dumb. He exhibited the effects of his labours on several pupils, and read a memoir on the subject before the Academy, in 1749. The Abbé de l'Epée has hitherto had the credit of this discovery, but the claims of Perreira have been vindicated by a French writer.* He was succeeded by a Polish Jew, named Salkind Horwitz, whose essay on the amelioration of the state of the Jews received the prize along with those of Gregoire and Thierry. Dr. Bloch, the famous naturalist, and Professor Marcus Hertz were also Jews of the same period. All these, and many more, were instrumental, either directly or indirectly, in communicating new ideas to their brethren.

* Pallissot *Mémoire pour serv. à l'Histoire de not. litt.* 1805, as cited by Jost, vol. ix., p. 99.

Their labours would in every case have produced great results; but the times did still more. A new era had commenced;—the Christian, or, more properly speaking, the Gentile civilized world had become intoxicated with the idea of reforming everything. Several writers, as Dohm and Gregoire, advocated the regeneration of the Jews, and the French revolution furnished an opportunity for realizing some of their ideas. The Jews had been much neglected or cruelly oppressed, but now a new system of legislation commenced. On the 27th of September, 1791, the French National Assembly declared them citizens of France. On the 2d of September, 1796, a similar decree was passed in Holland. The subsequent extension of French power hastened the reform of the Jews in Germany. Hitherto we have considered the unassisted efforts of individuals: but reform soon got political power on its side, and thus had full scope for its development, and abundant opportunity to exhibit its nature and its intentions. Napoleon, then in the zenith of his power, soon perceived the spirit that was stirring in the Jewish mind, and conceived the idea of turning it to his own advantage. He thought that the Jews, existing

in considerable numbers in most parts of the world, understanding all languages, possessed of great wealth, and endowed with talents of a superior order, might prove useful allies in his plan of universal empire. He undertook the vast project of giving these scattered fragments a centre of unity in their long-lost, but never forgotten, national council—the Sanhedrin. His idea was, that all the Jews in the world would obey the Sanhedrin; and that a Sanhedrin, whose seat was Paris, and whose appointment depended on himself, would be governed by him. He clearly saw that with the old-fashioned Jews he could effect nothing. The land of their love was Palestine, their hope the Messiah, and God their only legislator. He knew that to them their religion was everything, and his decorations of the Legion of Honour worse than nothing, and an abomination. To make use of the Jews it was necessary to reform them; and he saw in the nation a large movement party, ready made to his hand, and willing, though upon different principles, to be the agents in effecting this reform. That Napoleon's intention was to make the decisions of the Sanhedrin the religious law of all the Jews in the world

there can be no doubt. It is plainly avowed in the speech of M. Mole, one of the Imperial commissioners, when addressing the Jewish deliberative assembly, 18th September, 1806. His words are:—

“The purity of your law has, no doubt, been adulterated by the crowd of commentators, and the diversity of their opinions must have thrown doubts in the minds of those who read them. It will be a most important service conferred upon the Jewish community, to fix their belief on those points which have been submitted to you. To find in the history of Israel an assembly capable of attaining the object now in view we must go back to the great Sanhedrin, and it is the great Sanhedrin which his Majesty intends to convene. This senate, destroyed with the Temple, will rise again to enlighten the people it formerly governed; although dispersed through the world, it will bring back the Jews to the true meaning of the law. . . . *The duties of the great Sanhedrin shall be to convert into religious doctrines the answers already given by this assembly, and likewise those which may result from the continuance of your sittings.*”*

* Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin, p. 245.

The reply of the Jewish president shows that he had fully entered into Napoleon's intentions. He says, "His Majesty, deeply impressed with the principle, that, in religious matters, faith is to be left to its own workings, is convinced that our answers, however satisfactory to him, were insufficient; that it was necessary that all the synagogues of France and Italy should adopt and adhere to them, and they should *become rules of faith for all the Jewish congregations of the western world.*" It was not for the Jews of France only, but of the world, that the Emperor intended his Sanhedrin; and therefore when a member expressed his opinion of the impropriety of sending the proclamation into the countries at war with France, his opinion was overruled, and it was determined to send it to all the Jews of Europe. On the 9th of February, 1807, the Sanhedrin was opened. The answers of the deliberative assembly were sanctioned, and a plan of reform adopted exactly suited to the Emperor's purpose. The Jews, and even the Rabbies, were to be governed by consistories, who of course were to be governed by Napoleon. Art. xii. of this plan defines the duties of the consistories:—"The functions of the con-

sistories shall be, 1st, to see that the Rabbies do not, either in public or private, give any instructions or explanations of the law in contradiction to the answers of the assembly confirmed by the decision of the great Sanhedrin." Art. xxi.:—"The functions of the Rabbies are, 1st, to teach religion; 2d, to inculcate the doctrines contained in the decisions of the great Sanhedrin; 4th, to represent military service to the Israelites as a sacred duty, and to declare to them, that while they are engaged in it, the law exempts them from the practices which might be incompatible with it." Art. xxii. fixes the salaries of the Rabbies.

It is almost inconceivable that any Jew could approve, much less praise, this system of spiritual tyranny, imposed by a Gentile despot. Yet Jost says, "The effects of these deliberations, to which the Emperor gave his assent, were peculiarly beneficial." The worldly advantage seems to have made him insensible of the degrading slavery of mind which it endeavoured to establish. As a proof of the benefit, he tells us, "that two years after the reform, there were, in France, 1232 Jewish landed proprietors, 797 persons in military

service, 2360 mechanics, and 250 manufacturers. Abraham Cologna received the order of the Iron Crown, and three Jewish military officers the Cross of the Legion of Honour." And this was a compensation for the loss of religious liberty, which was clearly at an end. No Rabbi was allowed to teach any thing contrary to the decisions of the Sanhedrin, most of which were decided departures from the code of Rabbinic law. There can be no doubt that, from the moment when this reform became law, five-sixths of the Jewish population, still conscientious believers in Rabbinic law, were robbed of their religious rights. Neither mind nor body was free. The Rabbies were commanded to teach military obligation, which they did not believe; and the unfortunate Jewish youths were dragged from the bosoms of their families, victims of a military conscription, sanctioned by the Sanhedrin. It is only another proof of the spirit of liberalism. To spread his own opinions, no matter how, is the Liberal's idea of liberty: to force them, *vi et armis*, down the throats of his countrymen, his notion of reform. And to effect this he is ready to be citizen in a republic, or slave to a despot.

We must, however, do justice in this matter to Napoleon. He desired to reform or remodel a religious community for his own purposes; but even he felt the indecency of legislating for a religious body to which he did not belong. He thought it necessary, at least, to preserve an appearance of permitting this body to reform themselves. Liberalism has advanced since his time. It has lost the delicacy of the revolutionary soldier, and feels it unnecessary to preserve even the show of respecting the rights of conscience.

In the French kingdom of Westphalia, a similar scene was acted. Israel Jacobson, a man whom the Jewish nation must ever venerate, even though they differ from his opinions, had for years laboured in private in the cause of reform. He was an honest, upright, benevolent man, and had already founded and endowed a school from his own resources. When the kingdom of Westphalia was erected, he had the ear of the Government, and was thus enabled to reform on a larger scale. A Jewish consistory was established on the French plan of dictating both to Rabbies and people. Elementary schools were established to educate the children as useful

members of the state, and a seminary for schoolmasters erected, all under the control of the consistory and the Government. Here we must again express our surprise, how Jews, whose forefathers had so cruelly suffered in seeing their children educated by force as Christians, should ever call in the arm of Government to effect a reform in education. Exclaiming against the yoke of the Rabbies, they imposed a more dreadful bondage; *for the last and worst bondage of an enslaved people, is the suffering any Government to interfere with the religious education of their children.* In Westphalia the public worship was reformed also. Jacobson, with his accustomed liberality, built a temple at Seesen, at his own expense, furnished it with an organ, formed a choir of the school children, and introduced the custom of regularly preaching in German. This was the first time since the destruction of the Temple that instrumental music was introduced into Jewish worship. The Rabbinic Jews regard the playing upon instruments as a work, and therefore a desecration of the Sabbath. On the occasion of the Hamburg reform, most of the Rabbies in Europe decided that it was contrary to the law, and would

not allow even a Gentile organist, as was proposed. But the reformed Jews had renounced the Rabbinical principle, and hailed this change with enthusiasm. Temples were subsequently erected at Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig, &c., and German preaching promises to become general. Klug and Solomon at Hamburg, Cohen and the two Auerbachs at Berlin, have already distinguished themselves as preachers.

The progress of reform was, however, retarded by the constancy of the Rabbinic Jews. The fall of the French power left it to its own resources. Many of the reformed Jews, with whom the writer of these pages has conversed, seem to think that the first movers went too far. The Catechisms published all ascribe some authority to the traditional law. But the truth is, they have as yet adopted no decided system either of doctrine or ecclesiastical discipline. If they remain true to the principles of Mendelsohn, they must ever remain a disjointed body, unless forced into unity by some despotic legislation. The total results of all that has been done may be considered, 1st, with regard to the effect on religious opinion; 2d, the practical

effects upon the nation. That we may not misrepresent the former, we will give Jost's view, as contained in his "History," so often referred to already. He says:—

“Although no system has been formed, we think that we have perceived amongst thinking Jews a general adoption of the following principles:—All agree that the Jews are no longer a chosen people, in the hitherto received sense, and look upon expressions of this nature, in the liturgy, only as an old form. They, however, assert, that the Holy Scriptures are the only source of a true religion, capable of standing the test of reason. They remain strangers to the doctrines of Christianity, and no one believes that a confession of the Christian faith, free from hypocrisy, is possible, unless in those who have been convinced by education and custom. This pure religion consists in the conviction, that a supernatural revelation had been made to the forefathers of Israel, to Moses and the prophets; consequently, in the belief that there is one God. For the instruction of man God has made known, through human instrumentality, that He is the moral Governor of the world, and that His eyes are upon men, valuing and

retributing according to their moral worth. This presupposes the immortality of the soul. The moral code of Scripture is looked upon as the only true one, in so far as it agrees with principles generally to be acknowledged. It therefore requires not only a moral life, but one based upon religious principle, and not on worldly philosophy. Every thing that appears to militate against this is rejected, and every passage of Scripture that appears hostile is explained from the circumstances of the times: as, for instance, the evil deeds of the patriarchs; and the same expedient was also applied to the miracles, which some explained away altogether; others endeavoured to explain on natural principles; but this system never became general. As to the ceremonial laws, no clear opinion has been expressed, but every one agreed with Mendelsohn, that they were only the shell that enveloped the kernel. In the course of sifting the huge mass of Rabbinic additions, a distinction was soon made between essential and non-essential. As the Divine origin of the Mosaic legislation could not be denied without the absolute overthrow of Judaism, all unauthorised additions were rejected; and a conviction

was formed, that the majority of the laws still in force were not applied in the sense of the legislator, as they belonged to the Holy Land, and in other lands could not be exactly observed; that in strange countries many duties of another kind, as military service, and such-like, must arise, and that, until the unknown period of the restoration of the Israelite monarchy by the expected Messiah, such laws only were to be observed as were necessary for preserving the essence of religion, or were useful for forming the congregations into a pious ecclesiastical community, without interfering with the existing relations of life, and intellectual improvement. In this way the religion remained orthodox, though not in the sense of the Rabbies."

Such is their own account of their religious opinions. The reader need hardly be reminded, that they are little better than Rationalism. As to the practical effects, in so far as they have delivered the Jews from oppression and contumely, I rejoice in them; but as I look forward to a greater destiny for the Jews than that promised by reform, I cannot forget that reform has unjudaized all its disciples.

1st, Old Jewish manners have passed away.

There is in the dress, the manners, and the domestic economy of the Rabbinic Jew, the holy tinge of a sacred antiquity. The reformed Jews appear as well-educated and accomplished Gentiles. Secondly, *Jewish education has well-nigh vanished.* The catechisms used in the elementary schools are but poor substitutes for the thorough course of Rabbinic training, to which their forefathers were subjected. The reform school will never produce a Kimchi nor a Joseph Karo. Thirdly, *their national language has been deposed from its place.* Hebrew is, to the Rabbinic Jew, half a mother tongue. Accustomed to it from childhood, they wrote it with facility, and, as far as the genius of the language is concerned, with elegance. It was their learned language, their medium of acquiring and communicating knowledge. It was a holy and reverend relic of their past greatness, and the token of their nationality. The reformed Jews speak, and write, and study in the language of the country where they reside. With them Latin and Greek stand quite as high as Hebrew. Fourthly, *they have renounced the land of their forefathers.* They have become citizens of the countries where they reside. A Jew, born in France, considers himself a

Frenchman. In short, reform, wherever it has prevailed, has robbed the Jews of their holy nationality, and sunk them to the level of a common-place religious sect. I rejoice to think that the Jewish books, the writings of Moses and the prophets, cannot be reformed, that they still remain the same. Men may strive as they please to reverse the destinies of heaven, but the Divine word and will shall be accomplished. Reformers may say, "We will be as the heathen," but still "the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be numbered amongst the nations."

IV.

RABBINISM CONSIDERED AS A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM.

RABBINISM has fared like all other religious systems: it has had prejudiced assailants to attack, and over-zealous admirers to defend it. The former have produced whatever they could find objectionable; the latter have carefully kept out of view whatever seemed to its disadvantage. The truth is, that it is a mixed system of good and bad. Founded on the inspired writings of Moses and the prophets, it necessarily contains much truth and wisdom; but expounded and enlarged by prejudiced men, it presents a strange incongruity of materials. To form a right estimate, therefore, it is necessary to consider both the good and the bad as impartially as may be.

The first and most prominent feature in Rabbinism is, that it acknowledges Divine revelation as the great basis of religion and morality, and teaches a future state of rewards and punishments. It is true, the Rabbies are

by no means agreed as to their nature, and Maimonides reckons as many as five varieties of opinions on this subject. "The first class think that the future bliss means Paradise; and that this is a place where they eat and drink without any previous labour or fatigue to the body; and that there are houses built of precious stones, and beds covered with silk, and rivers flowing with wine, and perfumed oils, and many things of the same kind. Further, that the threatened punishment means hell; and that it is a place burning with fire, where the bodies are burned, and the children of men tormented with various kinds of torment and affliction, too many to enumerate." "The second class are of opinion that by the expected good is to be understood the days of Messiah (may he soon be revealed!); and that at that time the children of men will all be angels, living and abiding for ever; and that they will be great of stature, and that they will multiply and increase until they cause the whole world to be inhabited for ever; and that this Messiah, as they think, will live by the help of the Name, Blessed-be-He: and that in those days the earth will bring forth garments ready woven, and bread

ready baked, and other like impossibilities; and that the punishment will be, that the wicked shall not exist, nor be worthy to have a part therein." "The third class thinks, that by the expected good is meant the resurrection of the dead; and their idea of this is, that man will live after death, and return with his relations and family, and eat and drink, and not die any more; and that the punishment will consist in not living after death with those that live." "The fourth class is of opinion that the reward to be attained by keeping the commandments is bodily rest, and the attainment of worldly pleasures in this present world, as fertility of the soil, much wealth, a numerous progeny, health of body, peace, security, an Israelitish king, and dominion over those who oppress us; and that the punishment which will overtake us, if we deny the law, is the opposite of these things, such as we experience at present in this state of captivity." "The fifth class, and they are very numerous, combine all these things, and say, that our hope is that Messiah will come, and raise the dead, and that they shall be gathered into Paradise, and there they shall eat and drink, and be

well fed all the days of the world.”* These opinions may be said to constitute the popular belief of the Rabbinical Jews; and it is evident from Maimonides’ confession, and still more from the pains which he took to confute them, that they were widely spread and tenaciously held in his day. They are still the opinions most commonly advanced by the mass of the Jewish people. It is no wonder, therefore, that many Christian divines have considered the expressions “the days of Messiah,” and the “world to come,” as synonymous. Maimonides has, however, endeavoured to establish another opinion more consistent with the ideality of his philosophy. He distinguishes between the days of Messiah and the world to come, asserting that the former expression refers to a state of this present world, whereas by the latter is to be understood the spiritual and eternal state; and this statement is defended at length by Rhenferdt, in his Dissertations “de Seculo futuro.”† The words of Maimonides are very

* Sanhedrin, fol. 119. Surenhus. Mishna, p. iv. p. 259.

† These Dissertations are to be found in “Meuschen’s Novum Testamentum ex Talmude Illustratum,” p. 1116 et sqq.

express and decided. He says, "Let it not come into thy mind that in the days of Messiah any part of the fashion of this world will be destroyed, or that there will be any change in the creation. The world will go on in its accustomed fashion. Isaiah's declaration that the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, is a parable and enigma. The meaning of this passage is, that Israel shall dwell securely with the wicked of the nations of the world."* A little lower down he adds, from the Talmud, "The wise men have said, that between the days of Messiah and this present world there is no difference except in the subjection of the kingdoms." In his treatise on Repentance, at the end of the eighth chapter, he gives another quotation from the Talmud, to the same effect—"Our wise men have said, that all the prophets have prophesied only of the days of Messiah, but of the world to come it is written, 'Neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.' (Isaiah lxiv. 4.)" In this same chapter he gives his own view of the future rewards and punishments in the

* Hilchoth M'lachim, c. xii.

following words:—"The good that is laid up for the righteous is the life of the world to come; and that is the life that knows no death, and the good that is unmixed with evil. The reward of the righteous is that they may be thought worthy of this happiness, and shall have a part in this bliss. The punishment of the wicked is that they shall not be worthy of this life, but shall be cut off and die. Whosoever is not worthy of this life, he dies never to live again. On the contrary, he is cut off in his wickedness, and perishes as the brute. In the world to come, there is no body nor corporeality, but only the souls of the righteous without a body, like the ministering angels. And as there are no bodies, neither is there eating nor drinking, nor any of those things which the bodies of men need in this present world, . . . but the righteous sit with crowns on their heads, and enjoy the glory of the Shechinah." The crowns here mentioned he also explains allegorically of the moral virtues for which they have been entitled to a share in this state of bliss. But that these are not the received opinions on the subject, appears from the pains which Nachmanides and others have taken to prove them not

heretical, and from the unqualified contradiction which they met from Abraham ben Dior. This last writer is particularly indignant at the assertion that there is to be no corporeality in the world to come, which, he says, is little short of a denial of the resurrection. This variety of opinion proves, however, that the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is a fundamental topic of Rabbinical theology, and that there is, therefore, a wide difference between this system and Infidelity. But the beneficial effect which this doctrine is calculated to produce on the mind is much weakened by another dogma, which asserts that every Israelite has a part in the world to come. This doctrine is laid down again and again in the Talmud, and seems to be universally adopted. "All Israel has a part in the world to come, for it is said, 'Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.' " * It is not meant by this that the wicked Israelites are not to be punished, but only that their punishment is to be temporary, and that when they have received the punish-

* Sanhedrin, fol. 90, col. 1.

ment due to their sins, they are then to enjoy eternal happiness. To this general rule, however, there are some exceptions. Those who deny the resurrection of the dead, or the Divine origin of the law, and those who are termed Epicureans, are all excluded from any share in the world to come. As to the Gentiles, the Rabbies teach that the pious amongst them are also to be saved; but neither Christians nor Mahometans are to be found in this happy number. Maimonides classes them both amongst the deniers of the law. He says, "the deniers of the law are of three sorts: first, he that says the law is not from God, yea, even one verse, or one letter. If he says that Moses gave the law himself, he is a denier. Also he that denies the comments on the law, that is, the traditional law, and who renounces the Agadah, as Sadok and Bajethos: and he who says that the Creator has changed one commandment for another, or that the law has long since been abrogated, though of Divine origin, as the Christians and Mahometans: each of these is a denier of the law." The Rabbies teach, as might be expected, that the way to eternal happiness is by the service of the one true God. Their doctrine concerning

the nature of God, as held at present, is expressed in the third article of the Maimonidean creed:—"I believe with a perfect faith that the Creator (blessed be his name!) is incorporeal, that he is not subject to any of those changes that are incident to matter, and that he has not any similitude whatever."* But it is a question whether this was their doctrine always. Eisenmenger has collected a great number of passages, from Jewish writers, ascribing to God corporeal attributes, assigning his dimensions, and even asserting that he wears phylacteries. Learned Jews now say, after Maimonides, that these passages must be understood allegorically; but the very first sentence of the "Moreh Nevuchim" is an acknowledgment that men had been accustomed to consider God as corporeal; and Abraham ben Dior† says plainly, "That many greater and wiser men than Maimonides held this doctrine, convinced by passages of Scripture, and still more from passages in the Agadah." Indeed, it appears that in this as well as some other doctrinal articles a change of sentiment

* Jewish Daily Prayers, p. 58.

† For an account of this Rabbi, see Wolf. Bib. Heb., Part I., p. 46.

was effected by the intercourse with the Moors and other Mahometans, and by the enmity against Christianity, which was much increased by the Crusades. But whatever variations there may have been in the doctrines, the practical part of Rabbinism has sustained but little change. The Rabbies teach that the one true God is to be worshipped and served, and that not merely with ceremonial observances, but with the homage of the heart. The "Pirke Avoth" contain many admirable precepts inculcating true piety—the Morals of Maimonides, and "the Duties of the Heart," * shew that the government of the heart and affections is the most acceptable worship. But it cannot be denied that the tendency of the system is to beget in the minds of the multitude an undue regard for merely external observances. Antigonus of Socho may say, "Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve their master disinterestedly." But R. Chananiah ben Akashia has said, "God, blessed be He, has been pleased to render Israel meritorious, therefore he multiplied to them the law and the commandments,

* Chovoth Hall'vavoth.

as it is said, 'The Lord was pleased for his righteousness' sake; he magnified the law, and made it honourable.' " Couple this doctrine with the endless catalogue of Rabbinical commandments, and the effect upon the minds of the people is easily conceived, especially when it is remembered that most of those commandments which are peculiar to the Jews are merely ceremonial. The Rabbinical Jew fulfils a commandment, and consequently lays up a certain portion of merit, by the mode of putting on his shirt, tying his shoes, washing his hands before and after meals, and by walking fast to the synagogue and slow coming away. The wearing of certain fringes (Tsitsith) on his garment, putting on his phylacteries, saying the prescribed prayers, and lighting the candles for the feast of dedication, are all meritorious acts. The Sabbath has a whole host of such meritorious observances; so has every festival and every fast; so that by the end of the year every Rabbinical Jew must think that he has a pretty tolerable stock of observances, and consequently of merit, laid up, to stand against whatever sins he may have committed. The "Sepher Lev Tov," a book written in Jewish German, and therefore intended for the common

people, says of the Sabbath alone, that "he who keeps the Sabbath aright has as much merit as if he kept the ten commandments, and even the whole law." And a little further on it says, "Though a man should commit the greatest sins mentioned in the law, yea, though he should commit idolatry, yet if he will keep the Sabbath aright, God will forgive him." (fol. 56, col. 3.)

But when we say that Rabbinism has this tendency, we do not mean to insinuate that this system overlooks our duty to our neighbour. On the contrary, it is both diffuse and minute in its precepts on this head. It not only lays down principles, but defines the conduct in a multitude of particular cases. Indeed, this is one of the peculiarities of the system, that it considers the civil law as an integral part of religion. Hence the directions about buying and selling, compensation for damage inflicted, marriage contracts, divorce, and even usury and money-lending, are all included in the six hundred-and-thirteen commandments which form the boast of every Rabbinist. Some few of this large number will be sufficient to show the spirit of the system, and what it teaches as to our duty

towards our neighbour. “According to the Rabbies it is an affirmative precept to visit the sick, and to comfort the mourners, and to carry forth the dead, and to bring home a bride, and to accompany travellers a part of the way, and to take part in all that is necessary for interment—such as carrying on the shoulder, and going before, and lamenting, and digging, and burying—and also to rejoice the bride and bridegroom, and to assist them in all that they require. Though these are commandments of the Rabbies, they are all included in the general rule, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. All things that thou wouldest that others should do unto thee, do thou to them who are thy *brethren in the law and the commandments*.” “Visiting the sick is a commandment binding upon all. The great are to visit those in humble estate, and the visiting is to be many times in the day; the oftener the better, only not so as to be troublesome. Whosoever visits the sick does as much as if he took a part of his sickness, and alleviated his suffering; and whosoever does not visit the sick is as guilty as if he shed blood.” Maimonides gives it as his opinion that “comforting the

mourners is even of paramount obligation, because to comfort the mourners is to show kindness both to the living and the dead." Their precepts concerning the burying of the dead are of the same humane character. In order to bury the dead it is lawful to cease from the study of the law, which the Rabbies esteem to be superior even to prayer. Further, if there be one dead person in the city, all are forbidden to carry on their usual occupations until he be buried, unless there be persons to attend to it properly. It is also to be observed, that this precept is extended to the case of the Gentiles. The dead of the Gentiles are also to be buried, and their mourners to be comforted, and their sick to be visited for the sake of the ways of peace."*

Another amiable feature in the Rabbinical system is the provision which it makes for the poor. "It is an affirmative precept to give alms to the poor of Israel, according as the poor have need, if it be in the power of the giver, for it is said, 'Thou shalt open thine hand wide to him' (Deut. xv. 8); and again, 'Thou shalt relieve him, a proselyte,

* Hilchoth Avel, c. xiv.

or a sojourner, that he may live with thee:’ and again, ‘That thy brother may live with thee’ (Lev. xxv. 35, 36). And whosoever sees a poor man begging, and shuts his eyes from him, and does not give him alms, transgresses a negative precept, for it is said, ‘Thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother.’” The extent of the charity is fixed according to the wants of the poor person—“According as the poor hath need thou art commanded to give. If he has no clothing, he is to be clothed; if he has no furniture, it is to be bought for him; if he has no wife, he is to be helped to marry one; if a woman, she is to be assisted in getting a husband; yea, if it had formerly been the custom of the poor person to ride on horseback, and to have a servant running before him, but now he has come down in the world,—it is a duty to buy him a horse to ride and a servant to run before him, for it is said, ‘Sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth’ (Deut. xv. 8).” The Commentary in the Joreh Deah says, that this extent of charity is not to be expected from individuals, but by the joint contributions of the many; and some persons may think that

neither the few nor the many amongst the Jews practise what is here prescribed; but we are considering the system, and therefore think it right to exhibit its principles, which in this respect far excel those of the political economists of the day, and, if practised, would prevent much crime, as well as go far to diminish human misery. The Rabbies further provide "that in every city where there are Israelites, known and faithful men should be appointed to go round and collect the appointed alms." When they had the power, they punished with stripes any one who refused to give, and at present they hold out every inducement in the way of persuasion and threatening. The Hebrew word which they use for *alms* properly signifies *righteousness*, and hence they bring many passages from Scripture to move the people to the performance of this duty. "We are bound to be more careful respecting this commandment of alms, than about any other of all the affirmative precepts, for almsgiving is a characteristic of the righteous seed of Abraham our father, as it is said, 'I know him that he will command his children to do alms' (Gen. xviii. 19). By almsgiving alone it

is that the throne of Israel is established, and that the law of truth standeth, for it is said, ‘By alms (in righteousness) thou shalt be established’ (Isaiah liv. 14). By alms alone it is that Israel shall be delivered, for it is said, ‘Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with alms’ (righteousness) (Isaiah i. 27.)” A man who will not give alms is said to be as bad as an idolater, and it is even suggested that it is necessary to inquire into his genealogy, for such cruelty is found only amongst the Gentiles, as it is said, ‘They are cruel, and will not pity,’ but all Israel and he that is joined to them are as brothers, as it is said, ‘Ye are the children of the Lord your God.’” From these few extracts it appears that the Rabbinical system inculcates mercy and charity amongst those who profess it. An examination of the judicial laws would show that its tendency is also to dispense justice. But some of its advocates are not content with this praise; they endeavour to show that it is liberal, according to the modern sense of the term—that it teaches that all men without exception are brethren—that it meddles with no man’s religion, but allows every man to go to

heaven his own way. This is perfectly false. If there be one religion more exclusive than another, it is Rabbinism. It divides mankind into four classes—Israelites, proselytes, children of Noah, and idolaters; and between each class it makes a great difference. As to idolaters, so far from regarding them as brethren, it applies to them the commandments given against the seven nations of Canaan:—“It is an affirmative precept to destroy idols and idolaters, and everything made for such a purpose, for it is said, ‘Ye shall utterly destroy all the places’ (Deut. xii. 2); and again, ‘But thus ye shall deal with them,’ &c. (Deut. vii. 5.) And in the land of Israel it is a commandment to pursue after idolatry until we destroy it from all our land. Elsewhere we are not commanded to pursue after it, but only in every place that we subdue we are to destroy all the idolatry found therein, for it is said, ‘Ye shall destroy the names of them out of that place’ (Deut. xii. 3).” “Further, it is forbidden to show them any kindness, for it is said, ‘Thou shalt show no mercy unto them;’ therefore, if one sees a Gentile, a worshipper of the stars and planets, perishing or drowning in a river, he is not to be

helped out. If we see such an one near to death, we are not to deliver him; but, to destroy him with the hand, or to thrust him into a pit, or anything of that kind, is forbidden, because he is not at war with us." * It may be thought that this is utterly at variance with the above humane command to bury the dead of the Gentiles and to visit their sick, and with another command often quoted, "to feed the poor of the Gentiles along with the poor of Israel." But the reason assigned for both these precepts removes the apparent contradiction. These things are commanded "for the sake of the ways of peace." The context in Maimonides is very explicit. He says, "The poor of the idolaters are to be fed with the poor of Israel *for the sake of the ways of peace*. They are also permitted to have part of the sheaf forgotten, and of the corner of the field, *for the sake of the ways of peace*. It is also lawful to ask after their health even on their feast-day, *for the sake of the ways of peace*; but never to reiterate the salutation, neither to enter the house of an idolater on the day of his festival to salute him. If he be met in the street, he is to be saluted in a low tone of voice, and

* Hilchoth Accum c. vii., &c.

with a heavy head. But all these things are said only of the time that Israel is in captivity amongst the nations, or that the idolaters have the upper hand of Israel; but when the hand of Israel is strong, it is forbidden to suffer an idolater in the midst of us either to dwell or to pass from place to place with merchandize. He is not to pass through our land until he take upon him the seven commandments given to the children of Noah, for it is said, ‘They shall not dwell in thy land, not even for an hour.’” It may be thought, however, and it is often confidently asserted, that Rabbinism does not interfere with the religion of other nations. It is true that the Jews do not interfere, and that for ages they have been a quiet people, attending only to themselves.* But the conduct of the Jews, and the Rabbinical system, are two different things. The system commands the conversion of the heathen by force, and sentences them to death if they refuse to be converted—

* That they were formerly not so quiet, may be inferred from the laws of Constantine, Constans, Honorius, &c., which forbid the Jews to circumcise their Christian or Gentile slaves, and to make compulsory conversions. See Büsching’s *Geschichte der Judischen Religion*. Berlin, 1779, pages 206, 207.

“Moses our master did not give the law as an inheritance to any but Israel, as it is said, ‘the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob;’ and to those of the nations who might wish to become proselytes. Moses our master has also commanded us, by Divine appointment, to compel all that come into the world to embrace the commandments given to the children of Noah. And whosoever will not embrace them is to be put to death.”* Their doctrines concerning the children of Noah are much more mild, but still the Rabbies are very far from considering even the pious of the nations as their brethren. They admit that such will have a share in the world to come, but make a wide difference between them and the Israelites, as may be seen from the following laws:—1st, A proselyte of this sort is not allowed to study the law.† 2d, If a female, a Jew cannot marry her.‡ 3d, It is lawful to lend on usury to the child of Noah.§ 4th, The murderer of this sort of proselyte was not put to death by the Sanhedrin.|| It

* Hilchoth M'lachim, c. viii. 10.

† Ibid.

‡ c. viii.

§ Hilchoth Malveh, c. v.

|| Hilchoth Rotzeach, c. ii. 11.

may, however, well be doubted whether according to Rabbinism there are any such proselytes at present. There are no doubt Gentiles who are not idolaters; but freedom from idolatry is not sufficient to constitute a child of Noah. In order to this, he must be received at a time when the Jubilee can be celebrated,* which is now impossible; and further, he must be formally received before three witnesses.† Christians have not fulfilled these conditions, and therefore, according to these laws, cannot be considered as the children of Noah and the pious of the world. Indeed, we have seen above that Maimonides reckons them amongst the deniers of the law, and in other places he says expressly that they are idolaters. But this is enough to show that Rabbinism is an exclusive system, and cannot be represented either as tolerant or liberal without keeping back a part of the truth. Not that we find fault with it or its teachers on that account. Until the Rabbies be conscientiously convinced that the system is wrong, we honour them for their uncompromising statement of their religious opinions.

* Hilchoth Accum, c. x. † Hilchoth M'lachim, c. x.

V.

THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDITION OF THE RABBINIC JEWESS.

THE progress of Jewish reform has created schools for Jewish female children, both free schools for the poor, and establishments of a higher order for the wealthy. But who ever heard of a female school amongst old-fashioned Rabbinical Jews? or who ever saw a Rabbinical schoolmistress, or a Rabbinical Jewess who gained a livelihood by teaching? The female schools in London, in Germany, in Warsaw, have all emanated from the power of Christian example, or the direct influence of the Government; they are not the natural offspring of Rabbinism, and consequently where this system still reigns, as in the East, and Poland generally, they are not to be found. Very many of the Jewish female children do not learn to read at all. Those that do learn are not taught by one of their own sex, but by a melammed, or a rabbi, or a

tutor. In very rare instances they learn to translate Hebrew, but in general they only learn to read the words, that they may be able to repeat prayers which they do not understand. In Poland, they learn besides to read the vernacular dialect, and frequently also to write it, as they are much employed in shopkeeping, and sometimes manage all the worldly business, that the husband may give himself unreservedly to the study of the Talmud; and this last circumstance shows, if it were not abundantly attested by the high degree of mental cultivation and accomplishment commonly found amongst the Jewesses in Germany, that this want of education is not to be ascribed to any defect in the Jewish female mind, but to some external cause. The spirit of Rabbinism it is which degrades womankind, and does not suffer her to exercise the faculties which God has given. *Rabbinism lays it down as an axiom, that to study the law of God is no part of a woman's duty, and that to teach his daughters the Word of God is no part of paternal obligation.* "Women and slaves are exempt from the study of the law." "A woman who learns the law has a reward, but it is not equal

to the reward which the man has, *because she is not commanded to do so*. But though the woman has a reward, the wise men have commanded that no man should teach his daughter the law, for this reason, that the majority of women have not got a mind fitted for study, but pervert the words of the law on account of the poverty of their intellect. Every one who teaches his daughter the law is considered as guilty as if he taught her transgression. But this applies only to the oral law. As to the written law, he is not to teach her systematically, but if he has taught her, he is not to be considered as having taught her transgression.”* *Rabbinism teaches that a woman is unfit to give legal evidence, and classes her amongst those who are incapacitated either by mental or moral deficiencies.* “There are ten sorts of disqualification, and every one, in whom any one of them is found, is disqualified from giving evidence; and these are they—women, slaves, children, idiots, the deaf, the blind, the wicked, the despised, relations, and those interested in their testimony.”† *Rab-*

* Hilchoth Talmud Torah.

† Hilchoth Eduth. c. ix. 1.

*binism excludes women from being counted as part of the Synagogue congregation. Unless there be minian, that is, a congregation of ten, there can be no public worship of God, but the Rabbies have decided, "that these ten must all be men, free, and adult;"** so that if all the Jewesses in the world could be gathered into one synagogue, they would all count as nothing, and unless there were ten men present, the minister of the synagogue would not read prayers for them.

Rabbinism teaches, that to be a woman is as great a degradation as to be a heathen or a slave, and provides the same form of thanksgiving for deliverance from womanhood as from heathenism or slavery. The Jew says every day in his prayers, "Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God! King of the universe, who hath not made me a heathen. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! King of the universe, who hath not made me a slave. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! King of the universe, who hath not made me a woman."†

Rabbinism, where it is not corrected by the influence of Christianity, allows polygamy, and

* Orach Chaiim, sect. 55.

† Daily Prayers, fol. 5, 6.

decides that "A man may marry many wives, even a hundred, either at once, or one after another, and his wife cannot prevent it, provided that he is able to give to each suitable food, clothing, and marriage duty." *

Rabbinism allows the greatest facility of divorce. "The school of Shammai says, A man is not to divorce his wife unless he shall find some uncleanness in her, for they interpret the verse (Deut. xxiv. 1) according to its simple meaning. The school of Hillel thinks, that if a woman let the broth burn it is sufficient, for they interpret the words, 'a matter of uncleanness,' to mean, either uncleanness, or any other matter in which she has offended him. But Rabbi Akiva thinks, that a man may divorce his wife, if he only find another handsomer than she is. * * * But the legal decision is according to the school of Hillel, that is, if a wife sin against her husband, he may divorce her."† The spirit of unqualified contempt breathed in these laws necessarily implies

* Jad Hachasakah, Hilchoth Ishuth., c. xiv. 3.

† Arbah Turim, Hilchoth Gittin., i. The reader who wishes to see more on these subjects, may read "Old Paths," p. 181—192.

that the Rabbinical Jewess does not hold the station occupied in the social circle by the Christian female; the express exemption from the obligation to study the law, and the extreme difficulty that used to exist to procure it in a language that she could understand, kept her in a state of profound ignorance respecting the history and doctrines of that religion taught by Moses and the Prophets. The religion of the Rabbinical female population consists, therefore, chiefly in the observance of the ceremonial commandments, which it is their duty to keep, as the three commandments, the external sanctification of the Sabbath, the fasts and festivals, and especially the preparation of the food. But it must not be supposed that they are satisfied with the mere external acts, or devoid of zeal and devotional feeling. On the contrary, they are zealous even to bigotry for the observance and defence of Judaism, and determinately opposed to all innovation. Their obedience to the Rabbinic law is hearty and devout, and accompanied, I doubt not, in many cases, by an earnest desire to work out their own salvation. Their love of prayer is attested by the new editions of the prayers call S'lichoth

and T'chinnoth, which are continually appearing in the Jewish language. But their religious state can be best understood by looking over these books of devotion. I shall therefore give a few extracts from one written by a Polish Jewess for the use of her sisters of the house of Israel. The original is in the Jewish dialect, but where or when it was printed is not told us in the title. Title-page it has none. It is a small pamphlet of sixteen pages, and at the top of the first page the title is thus given, "THE THREE GATES. This T'chinnah was made by the pious woman Sarah (may she live), the daughter of our Doctor and Rav, Rabbi Mordecai, of blessed memory, grandson of the Rav our Doctor and Rav, Rabbi Mordecai, who was *President of the house of Judgment** in the holy congregation of Brisk.† May it stand until Elias comes."

After which the authoress thus begins:—"I, Sarah, descended from respectable ancestors,‡ I do this out of love to God, blessed be He, and blessed be His name, and now

* The usual title of the chief rabbi.

† Brzescz, in Lithuania.

‡ Literally "The daughter of good men." בַּת טוֹבִים

a second time arrange another new and beautiful T'chinnah in three gates. The first gate refers to the three commandments given to women, which are Challah,* ceremonial uncleanness, and lighting the lamps. The second contains a T'chinnah, to be prayed when the new moon is blessed; and the third gate is concerning the dreadful days.†

“I call to my help the living God, blessed be He, who lives for ever and eternally, and present this second beautiful and new T'chinnah in German, with great love and earnest prayer, that God may have great mercy upon me, and upon all Israel, that I may not be obliged to be long *a fugitive and a vagabond*; and through the merits of our mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, and my own dear mother Leah, I will pray God, that the present period of my being *a fugitive and a vagabond* may be an atonement for my sins; and that God may forgive that which I have done amiss, and that I have talked in the Synagogue during

* Challah is the piece of dough which is separated to pronounce a benediction when the woman is kneading.

† The dreadful days are the ten days from the New Year to the Day of Atonement. They are called dreadful because they are the last term of grace for the impenitent.

the time of prayer, and whilst the dear law was reading, &c.” Now this extract, though very short, throws much light upon the religious state of the Rabbinical Jewess. It shows us that there is a deep conviction of guilt, a fearful expectation of punishment, and a firm persuasion that an atonement and the merits of another are necessary to procure forgiveness; at the same time, that it manifests a profound ignorance of the revealed way of salvation. Like the Romanist, the Rabbinic Jewess looks to the merits of the saints, and trusts in the efficacy of purgatorial suffering. Her petition, that her wanderings as “a fugitive and vagabond,” may not be of long continuance, and that her sufferings of this kind may atone for her sins, does not refer to her wandering about in this life, but to the wandering of the soul from one body to another. The Rabbinic Jews believe in the transmigration of souls,* and think that the worst species of transmigration is that designated by the words “fugitive and vagabond.” Such

* See the small *Jalkut Rubeni*, in voce גלגולים, where a great number of passages on this subject are collected; and also *Eisenmenger's entdecktes Judenthum*, vol. ii. c. 1.

souls are pursued by evil angels and devils, pass into the bodies of Gentiles, birds, and beasts, and have no rest. What a dreary prospect for a dying sinner! At the close of a life of misery, how dreadful to have no hope of salvation, and no expectation of a haven of rest, except as it can be attained by the purgatorial wanderings of the soul in states of existence more penal and more unhappy than that which is drawing to its close. One would have thought that the doctrine of transmigration might be held by some speculative Rabbies, but that it could never have pervaded the popular theology. Acquaintance with Rabbinical Jews, however, soon shows that it is common amongst all classes, and this little book, now before us, written by a Polish Jewess for the use of her female co-religionists, and that in the most corrupt and common dialect of Jewish, proves that it is prevalent amongst the most unlearned class of all, The women; that it is so entirely a portion of their creed as to be interwoven with their daily petitions, and so thoroughly wrought into the imagination, as to form an object of constant terror. On a subsequent page the authoress urges this

same topic again, in a paragraph headed, "A moral lesson for women," of which the following is an extract:—

"I, the married woman, Sarah, beseech the young women not to talk in the dear synagogue, for it is a great sin, and I remember what happened to the Mishnaic Doctor, Rabbi Eliezer, son of Simon, how he met some of the appointed angels, leading two asses laden with punishments. He asked the angels for whose sake that was, and they answered, for the sake of the people who talk in the synagogue, from after the prayer Barooch Sheamer, until after the Sh'monah Esreh.* Wherefore, I beseech you to avoid this, that ye may not (God forbid) be punished with that state of 'a fugitive and a wanderer.' Therefore, learn of me, and confess your sins before the blessed God. I pray you also to have mercy upon widows and orphans, and proselytes and captives, and upon old people, and upon all who are sick. For we should remember ourselves when we fast, how we are ready to faint, and therefore every one should think of the bitterness which the poor feel when meal-time comes, and they, and their wives, and their children,

* See Daily Prayers, p. 14.

have nothing wherewith to refresh their souls." Here the wandering of the soul is held forth as a dissuasive from talking in the synagogue, to which the Jewesses are, of course, strongly tempted, as they understand but little of the service, and being partitioned off from the congregation, seem to form no part of it, and to have no concern in what is going forward. Here also the amiable part of Judaism, care for the poor, is put forward as a means of delivering the soul, and a practical use of fasting pointed out, not commonly thought of, namely, to remind us of the sufferings of the poor, and to make us charitable. It is curious to see that amongst the poor and suffering, mention is made of proselytes, which would seem to intimate that cases of conversion to Rabbinism still occur; and it is currently reported amongst the Jews in Poland, that many persons do embrace Judaism. The writer of these sketches, however, never met more than one case, and that was a young man, whose father and whole family had become converts many years before. The young man had received a regular Talmudical education, and acquired the wandering habits usual amongst young Talmudists. He had, however,

returned to the profession of Christianity. In this country also there are stories of proselytes, but they are chiefly of women who have married Jews. Several cases of this kind have come under the writer's notice. It is not uncommon to send such persons to Amsterdam, that they may be received as proselytes according to the forms prescribed by Rabbinic law, and some of them become strict and bigoted Jewesses. It can hardly be supposed, that these persons are first instructed in the real doctrines of the Talmud respecting women, or, indeed, that their Christian education had been much attended to. There is another little book of the same nature as that last quoted, entitled, "The Restorer of the Soul," and of which the title says, "That it was composed for the pious women, that they may repeat it the whole year, but especially that in the month of Elul, from the time that the cornet begins to be blown, until the Day of Atonement, they may repeat it every day with great devotion." The prayers in this book are of a more devotional character, and one of them affectingly describes the feelings of the dispersed of Israel, now that they are without priest and without sacrifice: "O God of the whole world, we pray

thee, receive our prayer. We have no advocate, no temple, no priest that can pray for us—nothing but our prayer which we pray unto thee, and therefore we cast ourselves entirely upon thee, that thou shouldest remember us for good, for we have nothing to hope in but in Thee, that Thou shouldest help us in every time of need. O gracious God, how can we sinful creatures have the face, so much as to pray unto thee! Yet we do pray for free gifts, and make mention of the merits of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom thou didst promise not to forsake their children, even though (which God forbid) we should sin so much as to be undeserving of mercy. Look then upon the likeness of Jacob which is painted upon thy throne of glory,* who for the sake of his children often ventured his neck: and, gracious God, we surely are thy children, and we have now been so very long in captivity,

* The likeness of Jacob our father is engraved upon the throne of glory, for of him it is said (Gen. xxv. 27), "Dwelling in tents." But the arithmetical power of the letters of אֱהָיָה TENTS, is equivalent to that of the letters in הַכִּסֵּא "THE THRONE." Therefore it follows that Jacob dwells on the throne, that is, that there is a likeness of him there. See Jalkut Rubeni in כִּסֵּא הַכְבוֹד

and are scattered hither and thither, and hope in thy mercy, that in this year we should again become a people. Lord of the worlds, we pray to Thee with tears, for even when all thy gates are shut, the gate of tears is still open. Put then our tears in thy bottle, and wash out our sins. Exchange the attribute of judgment for that of mercy. Gracious God, judge us with the attribute of mercy, and put into our hearts to do repentance, that we may serve thee with our bodies, and that we may overcome the propensity to evil; and strengthen us that we may not give way to it, that there may be no accuser of thy poor children before thee to say that they are poor in commandments. In captivity we cannot keep them, for all our pleasant things are taken away. Our advocates who should pray for us are not to be found: and thus we are in great bitterness, and pray that the attribute of mercy may intercede for us, that we may be redeemed and comforted speedily, even in the present year. Amen."

But a very important part of a Jewess's religious duties is to visit the burial-ground and pray over the graves, and therefore one of these manuals of female devotion gives

directions, and furnishes suitable prayers for the performance of this duty. It contains prayers to be said over the grave of a Rabbi, a father, a mother, paternal and maternal grandfather, adult children, and infants, a brother, a sister, husband, wife, friends, acquaintances, &c. One may serve as a specimen.

PRAYER TO BE SAID OVER THE GRAVE OF A
PATERNAL GRANDFATHER.

“Peace be upon thee, my father’s father. In peace may thy bones rest in this world, and thy soul in the other world. Mayest thou ascend to the high heavens under the wings of God. To-day I went forth, and to-day am I come to the place where thou art laid, thou that wert in our family a godly lord and the best amongst us. Thou hast been a pleasant branch in our family. Thou didst watch over us in thy life, and now thou shalt serve again in thy death, and be our intercessor before God, a good messenger and a good advocate in the midst of our brethren. Order my prayer aright before the Almighty God, that he may make an end of his long-continued wrath, and not destroy us from off the world.

. . . . Command the holy angels to watch over us from this time forth for ever. Give me children and sons-in-law who will be learned men, that our eyes may be enlightened, and that our eyes may see Jerusalem and Zion the habitation of palaces. And mayest thou rest and arise in the resurrection of the dead, to enjoy the pleasures of the world to come, and of Leviathan* and other delights, Amen." (Maaneh Lashon., fol. vii. col. 2.)

The other prayers are all of the same character, for the dead and to the dead. From these specimens of prayer the reader can have a better notion of the circle of a Rabbinic Jewess's religious ideas than from any description. But it may be said, that these publications are confined to Poland, and do not give a fair representation of the religious instruction which the Rabbies have provided for the female Jewish population. It is necessary, therefore, to refer to that book which used, up to the period of Jewish reform, to constitute the chief reading of all Jewesses in Germany, Holland, and Poland, is still universally used in the latter country, and by the old-fashioned Rabbinical party in the two former. The title, "Ts'enah

* For an account of Leviathan, see "Old Paths," p. 65.

ur'enah b'noth Tsion," *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold* (Sol. Song iii. 11), shews that it was particularly intended for female reading, and the numerous editions of it which have proceeded from the printing presses of Amsterdam, Basel, Germany, and Poland, prove the universal esteem in which it used to be held. It begins thus:—

“ בְּרֵאשִׁית B'reshith, &c. ‘In the beginning God created,’ &c. At the first creation of heaven and earth, the earth was waste and empty, and darkness upon the deep, and the throne of glory of the blessed God stood in the air above the waters. And why does the law begin with the letter B [ב]? He teaches us that as the letter ב has three sides shut and the fourth side open, this is the case with the world also. God has shut three sides, but on the north-side he has not made any heaven, for he will say to the nations of the world, Let your false gods come and make a wall to the fourth side, for ye have considered them as gods. Another exposition. The letter B [ב] stands for B'rachah, *blessing*, and A [א] stands for Aroor, *cursed*; therefore God began with the B, whereupon the letter A [א] flew into the presence of God, and said, Begin the law with

me, for I am the first letter of the alphabet. God replied, When I give the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai I will begin with A [א] Anokhi. That the law begins with the word B'reshith (in the beginning), is to teach us that the world was created for the sake of the law, which is called *Reshith darkho* (the beginning of his way), and for the sake of Israel, who are called *Reshith T'vooatho* (the beginning of his increase. Jer. ii. 3.) Rabbi Isaac asks, Why did God describe the creation of the world in the law, for as the law is properly nothing but commandments, it should contain nothing but commandments? The answer is, That if the nations of the world should say to Israel, Why do ye take possession of the land of Israel, ye are guilty of robbery? Israel might answer, God made the world, he may, therefore, give it to whomsoever he will."

On the words, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly," after noticing the creation of fish and fowl, this book adds, "The great Leviathan also, and his wife. But God saw that if this species should be propagated, they might be able with their strength to overthrow the world, therefore he slew the female Leviathan, and salted her for the righteous to eat in the days

of the Messiah. . . . The text speaks of some fish which are called great Tanninim (whales), for there are some fish which are many hundred miles long, as is related in the Talmud, where Rabbah, the son of Chanah, says, The sea threw out a great fish; sixty cities ate of it, and sixty cities salted some of its flesh for food. From one of its eyes were made three hundred measures of oil. When I passed that way a year after, the people were sawing the bones into great beams, for building, in that city. The same rabbi also relates, We were once sailing in the middle of the sea, when we saw a great fish, whose back projected far out of the water, and there was sand on his back. We went out of the ship, and made a fire on the fish, in order to cook, for we thought it was a mountain. When the fire grew large, and the fish felt it, he turned himself about, and if the ship had not been close to the fish, we should all have been drowned." I have inserted these well-known stories, because the Talmudists, when attacked upon their palpable falsehood, and consequently the falsehood of the Talmud, defend themselves by saying, that the salting of Leviathan, and these travellers' tales, are to be interpreted

spiritually, and that they contain profound mysteries. It is evident that this was not the opinion of Rabbi Jacob, the author of this book, who tells them to the Jewesses as indubitable facts, and holds out the salted Leviathan as one of the delicacies of the world to come.

Upon the creation of man, this book says, "When God was about to create man, the angels gathered together, and some said, Man ought not to be created, for he is nothing but falsehood. Others said, that he ought to be created, for he gives alms, and does acts of mercy. Others said, that he ought not to be created, for he has no peace, and is fond of quarrelling. What did God do? He took truth and cast it down from heaven upon the earth. That is, God said to the angels, Man is better than you. For ye are altogether intelligence and propensity to good, and have no propensity to evil; ye, therefore, cannot help being always pious. But man upon the earth has a propensity to evil, therefore when he is pious, he is a much greater novelty than you angels. And as to what ye say about his being nothing but falsehood, and quarrelsome, and sinful, I will make him mortal, and he will be afraid of death, and will therefore be pious; and I will

take the holy soul again, and will purify it in hell, and it shall come again to its first place, the throne of glory, and thus I shall lose nothing." It is unnecessary to remind the reader that man is here furnished with a plausible apology for all his misdoings, and taught that his piety is peculiarly meritorious.

In explaining the meaning of the words, "God blessed the Sabbath-day," it is said, "God blessed the Sabbath, in order that the people should honour it with good eating, and then God will make them rich. Rabbi Chiia, son of Abba, says, I was once invited home by a householder in the city of Lodkia. A silver table, carried by sixteen men, was brought in before us, and on it was placed some of every thing that was created in the six days of creation, and in the middle of this sat a child, who cried out, 'The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is, the world, and they that dwell therein;' and this was done that the householder should not think too much of himself. Hereupon I asked him, What merit is it where-with thou hast deserved to be the possessor of such wealth? To which he replied, that he had formerly been a butcher, and whenever he got a good beast, he kept it for Sabbath, even

from Sunday to Sabbath. To which I said, I am well aware, that for this God gives luck and blessing: and in like manner, every one that honestly keeps the holidays with good eating, God gives him a good reward in this world, and makes him rich. And thus, in the book Rabbathi, Rabbi Tanchuma relates a story, how on the eve of the day of atonement a prince sent his servant to buy fish. The servant came to the fishmonger, but at the same time came a Jewish tailor, and offered a higher price, and at last bought the fish for twelve florins, and took it home. The prince was very angry with his servant for returning without the fish. The servant said, A Jewish tailor got the fish from me by offering the higher price of twelve florins. The prince sent for the tailor, and asked him, Why did you outbid me, and get the fish? The Jew replied, Why should I not buy the fish, and all sorts of good food? To-morrow we have a wonderful day, on which God forgives all the sins that we have committed in the whole year; why then should I not be joyful? The prince replied, You are quite right. So the tailor went home, and on splitting open the fish, he found a pearl, the sale of which supplied him with good food all his life long, and delivered

him from the necessity of being a tailor." Thus the book goes on, page after page, except that it is not always so harmless. It is a complete encyclopædia of Rabbinism, legendary, doctrinal, and judicial; may be read with ease by any one who understands German and a little Hebrew, and will take the trouble of learning the Jewish-German character; and is really worth a more extended review than can here be given to it. Only one specimen more can now be given, and that is, the account of the death of Moses, which is on several accounts worthy of attention. It is added to the prayer of Moses, to be allowed to enter the promised land. (Deut. iii. 23.)

"Moses prayed that God would allow him to enter the land of Israel, for Moses thought, Inasmuch as I have conquered Sihon and Og, the oath which God swore that I should not enter the land of Israel is null and void. As I have begun to take possession of the land of Sihon and Og, I shall go on to possess the land of Israel. 'Let it suffice thee' (Deut. iii. 26), God said to Moses, The first Adam brought death into the world, therefore all men must die. To this Moses replied, O Lord of the world, the first Adam was guilty of trans-

gression. God said, Abraham was obliged to die, though he allowed himself to be cast into the fiery furnace for my sake.* Moses answered, Abraham was the father of a wicked son, Ishmael. God said, Isaac stretched out his neck to be slaughtered, and yet he was obliged to die. Moses answered, Isaac was the father of the wicked Esau. God said, Jacob had twelve sons, all righteous men, and yet he was obliged to die. Moses answered, But Jacob did not ascend into heaven, neither did he receive the law as I have done. Moses said, also, Israel is in number six hundred thousand, and they have often committed transgressions, and thou hast pardoned them, and yet thou wilt not pardon me. God replied, One does a great deal more for the sake of a whole congregation than for an individual. Moses said, Punish me with afflictions in my body, but do not give me into the hand of the angel of death, so will I declare thy praise in the whole world, as it is written (in the 118th Psalm), 'I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the

* The Jews have a tradition that Abraham rather than commit idolatry suffered himself to be cast into a fiery furnace.

Lord.' God replied, There is a gate into which the righteous must enter, as it is written (in a following verse), 'This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter therein.' When Moses saw that he could effect nothing, he went to the heaven and the earth, and said, Make intercession for me. They replied, We have got to pray for ourselves, for in due time we also must perish, as it is written (Isaiah l. 1. 6), 'The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment.' Moses then went to the stars, and to the sun, and the moon, and the high mountains: they all answered, We have enough to do for ourselves. He then went to the sea, but the sea said to him, Moses, what is the matter with thee? Thou smotest me with thy rod, and I divided, and the Schechinah used to stand always at thy right hand. As soon as Moses heard that the sea recounted the wonders which he had done in his youth, he ran away, and cried and wept before the highest angel, and said, Intercede for me. The angel answered, I have heard that thy prayer will not avail. Moses cried and wept, whereupon God said, I have sworn two oaths. If thou live, Israel must be

lost (which may God avert). But if Israel continues to live, thou must die. Moses said, Let me and my thousands perish, rather than that one soul of Israel should be lost. God said, If thy fear of death be so great, I will give the angel of death into thy hand. Moses answered, How will my mother Jochebed mourn? She has already buried two children, and now she must bury the third. God said, The time is come for Joshua to be king over Israel, therefore thou must die. Moses said, If that be the reason why I must die, I am willing to become Joshua's disciple, and let him be the Rabbi. God said, If thou art willing to do that, it is well. Immediately Moses went very early to the tent of Joshua, and stood at the door, and Joshua was expounding the law to Israel, but did not see Moses, for Moses bowed himself down, that the people should not see him, and held his hand over his face, that he might not be recognised. The people went to the tent of Moses, but at last they find him at the tent of Joshua, and Moses was standing, but Joshua was sitting. All the people cried, Joshua, what is the meaning of this, that thou sittest and Moses thy master stands? As soon

as Joshua saw that Moses was standing, he rent his garments and wept, and said, Rabbi, Rabbi, my Lord, what doest thou there? All Israel cried out to Moses, Teach us the law. Moses replied, I dare not. Whereupon they said We will not suffer thee to remain there. Then the daughter of a voice came forth from heaven, and said, Learn the law from Joshua. Immediately they began to learn the law from Joshua—and Moses sat at his right hand, and Eleazar at his left, and Joshua expounded the law in the presence of Moses. But when all Israel went forth from the house of study, they came to Moses, and said, Teach us, and give decision as to what Joshua has taught us. Moses said, I cannot. In the same hour Moses said, Lord of the world, it is time for me to die. An answer was given, It is now one hour to thy death. Moses said, Wait a little, I will bless Israel first. Thereupon Moses began to bless Israel separately, but when he saw the time was short, he blessed all Israel together. It was then told to Moses, It is half an hour to thy death, whereupon he began to beg pardon of Israel, and said, I have often vexed you when I was expounding the law, forgive me. They said also, Forgive us, for we

have often provoked thee to anger. Moses was then told, It is one minute to thy death. Whereupon he said, 'Blessed be His Name, He that liveth and abideth for ever and ever.' He said also to Israel, When ye are come into the land of Israel, remember me. They said, How could we forget thee, who hast done us so much good? Moses was then told, It is half a minute to thy death. Whereupon Moses laid both his hands upon his heart, and said to Israel, These two hands which received the law, shall be buried in the earth. Immediately his soul went forth, and neither man nor angel buried him, but God himself. He died on the seventh day of the month Adar, the same day on which he was born. God reckons the days of the righteous." (Fol. 219.)

Such is the account of the death of Moses, with which the Jewesses are edified, and which they receive as matter of fact. To the Christian reader it must appear as very profane and presumptuous thus to add to the Word of God, and exhibits a state of mind, in the author of this fable, which is almost inexplicable. And yet there is with all its absurdity a pathos and solemnity about it, which shows that the

author was himself in a solemn frame of mind, and that his object was to impress upon the reader the awfulness and the certainty of death. Moses feared death—Moses was compelled to die; how fearful then and how certain is death to us. It shews very strikingly how little Judaism can do for those who profess it, and may serve as a commentary to the apostle's words, "Who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 15.) From all these extracts the reader may form an idea of the social and religious condition of the Rabbinical Jewess. In life she ranks with slaves and children. Death is held up to her as an object of terror even to Moses, and after death her utmost hope is, that the wanderings of her soul may not be protracted, and that the fires of hell may prepare it for Paradise, one of the joys of which is to feast upon salted Leviathan. Some readers may perhaps be led to ask, What can be done to make her partaker of a better hope, and to communicate the tidings of Him, "who through death hath destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered them that were in bondage?"

VI.

JUDAISM AS IT IS TAUGHT IN MODERN JEWISH CATECHISMS.

THE first paroxysm of Jewish reform was very violent. Whilst it lasted, the Jews, as is confessed by Jost, utterly renounced the Talmud and all its observances. They thought of nothing but liberty of conscience, and breathed nothing but good-will to all mankind. Some of its effects are still visible. The reformed Jews are all outwardly, and, I doubt not, many of them in their hearts, very different from the orthodox professors of Rabbinism. But what has all the reform, that has made such a mighty noise in Germany for the last thirty years, really effected for the religious and moral improvement of the Jewish nation? Has it delivered them from the absurdities and anti-social doctrines of the Talmud? Has it helped them to make a bold and decided protest against the traditional adulterations of the pure and holy law of Moses? Has it stirred them

up to put forth a frank and honest confession of their faith, exhibiting the differences between them and the old Talmudists? Not one of all these things. Jewish reform has just done as much for real improvement as the Council of Trent did for reformation. It has talked a great deal—it has done nothing. I am led to this conclusion from the perusal of some modern Jewish catechisms. I have now before me two of very considerable authority. The one is the authorized catechism for Bavaria, as appears from the title-page—"Manual of the Mosaic Religion. Compiled by Dr. Alexander Behr, under the superintendence and guidance of the Supreme Rabbi, Abraham Bing, of Wurtzburg; examined and recognised by the Rabbinate of Furth, and several rabbies of consideration. With the most gracious privilege of his Royal Majesty. Munich, 1826."* In the preface, also, it is stated that it was published by royal mandate, at

* "Lehrbuch der Mosaischen Religion. Bearbeitet von Dr. Alexander Behr, unter Aufsicht und Leitung des Oberrabbiners Abraham Bing, zu Würtzburg, geprüft und anerkannt vom Rabbinate zu Fürth, und mehreren angesehenen Rabbinern. Mit Sr. Königlichen Majestät allergnädigsten Privilegium. München, 1826."

the public expense; and that a royal circular was issued to all Jewish schools, commanding its introduction. The second is entitled, "The Doctrines of the Mosaic Religion, by I. Johlson, teacher of religion at the Israelitish Congregational School, at Frankfort-on-the-Main; the third genuine and improved edition. Frankfort A.M., 1829."* Which also appears, from the preface, to have obtained the approbation of many of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, and the thanks of the German Confederation. These catechisms, then, will tell us the principles in which the Jewish youth, of an important part of Germany, are educated; and will help us to conjecture the sentiments of the next Jewish generation. A stranger jumble of palpable inconsistency was, perhaps, never presented to the public; and the approbation of such works by public authority does not lead us to form a very high estimate of the state of Rabbinic learning amongst the Rationalist divines of Germany.† These catechisms first lay down the

* Die Lehren der Mosaichen Religion, &c.

† Amongst the approvers of Mr. Johlson's work we find the redoubtable names of Dr. Stephani and Dr. Zimmerman.

divine authority of the Talmud; they then teach the relative duties on anti-talmudical principles; and lastly, confirm these anti-talmudic doctrines by mutilated Talmudic authorities, which, if taken with their context, prove the contrary of that which they are cited to confirm!

I. They teach the divine authority of the Talmud, or oral law. In the Bavarian Catechism (page 13, question 19) we read as follows: "In what manner did Moses transmit to us the laws?—Partly by means of the written, and partly by means of the oral law, or tradition." Page 16, question 25—"Have the Mishna and Gemara equal importance with the written law?—Answer. Just the same. They are and must be just as important as Holy Scripture, for they contain no arbitrary or human ordinances;—but 1st, Divine traditions and declarations to Moses; 2dly, Laws inferred by argumentation—*i. e.*, according to the thirteen traditional rules of interpretation; and, 3dly, Ordinances of the prophets and subsequent wise men, which are, as it were, erected round the Word of God, as a wall of defence. All these, as having been received by the whole nation, have the

same importance as Holy Scripture." This is a straightforward and intelligible confession. Now let us hear the Frankfort teacher, (page 89, question 133,) "Do we also believe that Moses plainly committed every commandment and ordinance to writing? No; we believe that God communicated some doctrines to Moses orally, which he was not allowed to communicate to others, except in the same way orally, and so we explain the verse, (Exod. xxxiv. 27,) 'Write thou these words *only* :* for, according to the meaning and contents of the same, I make a covenant with thee and Israel.'" (134.) "Are there not other traces of the existence of a tradition?—Yes; many others beside—*e. g.*, the passage, (Deut. xii. 21,) 'Thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, as I have commanded thee.' As amongst the written laws there is none which prescribes the mode of slaughtering, an oral doctrine must be taken for granted, to which this verse refers, and which explains this and many other commandments more accurately;—*yea, without this oral doctrine, we should know how to fulfil comparatively few*

* Mr. Johlson puts in this word *only*, for which there is no authority in the original.

of the laws of religion." (135.) "Are there, then, two doctrines; one written and the other oral?—No, not so; for, in reality, there is but one law, and one doctrine. Both taken together, the written and the oral, constitute but *one whole.*" (136.) "What do we understand, then, by the oral doctrine?—That part which more accurately explains the written laws, and determines their signification and application, in order that the latter may not be given over to the arbitrary interpretation of men, whose understanding is narrow, and often blinded by passions." (145.) "Which are the oldest writings that treat of tradition?—The Mishna and Gemara, which together are called the Talmud."

Here, then, the divine authority of the oral law is as distinctly stated by the enlightened Jews of Germany, as it could have been by Rashi or Saadiah centuries ago. What difference, then, is there between the doctrines of the reformed Jews and those of the old orthodox Talmudical school? I can discover none whatever. The old Talmudist taught nothing more, and here we see the modern Jews teach nothing less, than the

divine authority of the Talmud. Their doctrines are identical, and therefore every objection which has been for centuries urged against the older system applies with equal force to the new. The Talmud still remains, as Chiarini says, the *focus et ara* of Judaism. The modern Jews think to get out of this difficulty by suppressing the anti-social statements, and therefore we find—

II. That these catechisms teach the relative duties on anti-talmudic principles. The Bavarian Catechism, after going through all the details of our duty to our neighbour, asks a question (206)—“Are these laws and duties, affirmative and negative commandments, binding with respect to a non-Israelite?—Answ. By all means; for the fundamental law of all these duties, ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself,’ is expressly laid down by the Holy Scripture, in reference to the non-Israelite; yea, to the heathen, as it is written—‘And if a stranger sojourn with thee in thy land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.’” (Levit. xix. 33—35.)

In like manner, the Frankfort catechism asks, (Question 209,) “But whom does the Holy Scripture call *אֶחָד, עַמִּית, רֵיעַ*, our neighbour, our fellow-man, our brother? Are persons of another religion included in these expressions?—Answer. By these expressions are intended not only Israelites, but all men who live with us in one state; to whatever religious denomination they may belong, or of whatever nation they may be.” I admit that this is sound doctrine, but the evident attempt that is here made to smuggle it into the Talmudic system quite takes away its value. Why does the Bavarian Catechism talk of a “*non-Israelite*?” And why does the Frankfort Catechism put such a general question as—“Are persons of *another religion* included?” Why do they both avoid the plain straightforward question—“Are *Christians* to be looked upon as our fellow-men, our neighbours, and our brethren?” From what we know of Germany, we suppose that the inhabitants of Frankfort and Bavaria, not professing Judaism, are known by the common name of Christians. Why, then, is the word Christian omitted? I cannot suppress my conviction that it was omitted inten-

tionally, to avoid a difficulty. By talking thus generally of non-Israelites, and persons of another religion, they could, with some show of truth, reply in the affirmative, and adduce Scripture proof concerning "the stranger that dwelleth among you." Whereas if they had used the word Christian, this would have been impossible. They would have contradicted the Talmud, whose divine authority, they had asserted; and given offence to all the orthodox Jews, who know that a *Christian* is not included in that verse; but that according to the Talmud, he is an idolater; and therefore, neither a neighbour, a fellow-man, nor a brother. That Christians are considered as idolaters appears both from the Talmud and its compendiums. In the Talmudic treatise, "Avodah Zarah," (fol. 6, col. 1,) the Lord's-day is expressly mentioned as an idolatrous feast, and called the Nazarene day. The "Hilchoth Accum," c. ix. 4, says—"The Edomites are idolaters, and the first day of the week is *the day of their calamity*"—the Talmudic expression for an idolatrous festival. In the "Hilchoth Maachaloth Asuroth," the same plain declaration is made—"The Nazarenes are idolaters;" and that idolaters are

not regarded as neighbours is very easy to be demonstrated. The Frankfort catechism takes the trouble of enumerating the three words, *רֵעַ*, *עַמִּית*, *אָח*, neighbour, fellow-man, brother; and says—"By these expressions are intended not only Israelites, but all men who live with us in one state, to whatever religious denomination they may belong." Now it is a curious circumstance that the oral law, which this same Frankfort catechism declares to be divine, specifies these three words, and decides that an idolater is not any one of the three. First, let us take *רֵעַ*, neighbour. In the "Hilchoth Genevah," c. ii. l., we read, "He that steals from a *Gentile*, or he that steals property devoted to sacred purposes, is only to pay the principal; for it is said, 'He shall pay double unto his *neighbour*,' *רֵעַ*, Exod. xx. ii. 9,) *to his neighbour, but not to a Gentile.*" Next let us take *עַמִּית*, fellow-man. —We find it in Levit. vi. l, &c.—"If a soul sin, and lie unto his fellow-man, *עַמִּית* all that about which he has sworn falsely; he shall restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereunto." On this the oral law says, "He that sweareth to a *Gentile* must pay the principal, but is

not bound to add the fifth part. [Why not?] Because the law prescribes this only if he lie to his *fellow-man*." Hilchoth Gezelah, c. i. 7. Lastly, with regard to אָנְ, "brother;" when explaining the Israelite's duty if he find anything lost in the street, the oral law says, "To restore to an Israelite anything that he has lost is an affirmative commandment, for it is said, 'Thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother, אָנְ.' Anything that a Gentile has lost it is lawful to keep; for it is said, 'with all lost thing of *thy brother's* (אָנְ).'"

Now which of these two doctrines will the rising Jewish generation follow? Will they believe the compilers of these catechisms, that all men are their brethren? Or will they, on the authority of the oral law, which these same compilers tell them is divine, treat Christians as idolaters, and therefore exclude them from all the common offices of brotherhood? But whichever doctrine they follow, can catechisms, conducted on such principles, teach them truth and honesty? Even a dull child—and such the Jewish are not—can see that the authors are guilty of double dealing; that they meant to deceive one party; that either they did not believe in the Talmud, but found it necessary to

cajole the old orthodox Jews, or that they did believe in all the anti-social and intolerant doctrines of the Talmud, but found it necessary to throw dust in the eyes of the Christian public. In either case, it cannot be very edifying to the minds of youth to perceive, that guile and deceit are the principles upon which the catechisms of their religion are constructed. The Bavarian Catechism is, in this respect, particularly guilty. It has one subdivision, headed, "Of the duties, referring to every human being, without any difference;" in which it enters into the detail of our duty to our neighbour, with references chiefly to the *Yad Hachasakah* of Maimonides, as the authority for what is said. Now, suppose that a Jewish youth looks out these references, what will he think when he finds that Maimonides restricts these duties to the Jews; and, in some cases, expressly excepts the idolater? Let us take a few instances.—Question 180. "What is commanded in the first of these duties?—Answer. To spare the life of our fellow-men. We are not permitted to put to death even a beast, if its death do not promote some good, or prevent some harm: yea, we are not unnecessarily to cut down a fruit-tree; how much more are we

to reverence the life of man, who is the image of God? We are, therefore, forbidden not only to take away the life of man, but the slightest injury or maiming of his body is a great sin. It is permitted to the judge alone to cause that man who has forfeited his life, by crime, to be executed." In a parallel column, by the side of this answer, is printed a passage from Maimonides, concluding with the reference, "Maimonid. Hilch. Rozeach, i. 4."

One would naturally think that this answer was a translation of the Hebrew. It is, indeed, a strong declaration against murder; but it has not the least resemblance to the German. Literally translated, it is as follows:—"The house of judgment (the tribunal) must beware of taking a ransom from the murderer; yea, though he were to give all the money in the world, and though the avenger of blood were willing to let him go free: for the life of the murdered person is not the property of the avenger of blood, but of the Holy One, blessed be He: as it is written, 'For ye shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer.' (Numb. xxxv. 31.) There is nothing about which the law is so earnest as about the shedding of blood: as it is written, 'So ye shall not pollute

the land where ye are; for blood it defileth the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.'” (Ibid. 33.) This is a strong and beautiful passage; but it is, as the reader sees, no authority whatever for the German answer. But suppose that the youth, puzzled by the apparent want of connexion, should read on two leaves further, he will find a passage directly contradicting the last sentence, which says, “It is permitted to the judge alone to cause that man who has forfeited his life, by crime, to be executed.” On the next leaf but two, Maimonides not only permits, but *commands*, every Israelite to kill, either by force or by fraud, those criminals of the Jews whom he calls “Epicureans, Israelite idolaters, and vexers.” And if he should perchance turn back a single leaf, he will find that—“It is lawful, by all means, to kill the informer; yea, even in the present time, when we do not give judgment in cases involving capital punishment. It is lawful to kill him before he gives the information: as soon as he says, I am going to inform against either the person or the property of such a person, he makes it lawful to kill him. He is to be warned and told not to give

information; but if he be obstinate, and say 'No,' but 'I will inform against him,' it is a commandment to kill him; and he that is foremost to kill him, is considered as meritorious." What, then, is the youth to do now? Is he to follow the German answer, or the Hebrew authority to which he is referred? The latter he is told is the law of God; the former he perceives can only be either an opinion, or advice, or even a device, to evade the law of the land. The compilers of this catechism are guilty of a gross dereliction of duty. So important a matter as this, involving the lives of fellow-creatures, should not be thus slurred over. It was their bounden duty, when they restricted the power of capital punishment to the judge, to notice these two cases, occurring within a leaf or two of the authority to which they refer: they should either have solemnly declared that they abjure this doctrine, or, if they think this command to murder Epicureans and informers binding, as a part of the divine oral law, they should here have honestly stated this their belief, especially when they offered the catechism for royal sanction.

But does this authority from Maimonides

teach the Jewish youth “to spare the life of our *fellow-man*,” whether he be Jew or Gentile? In the Hebrew passage, as above translated, there is not any direct mention of either, though the notice of “the avenger of blood” would naturally lead us to think that Maimonides was speaking of an Israelite. Let us look, then, at the context. The first sentence of the chapter is—“Every one that killeth any human soul of Israel, transgresses a negative command; for it is said, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’” After this beginning, the chapter speaks exclusively of the duty to Israelites; and concludes with this remarkable sentence:—“Every one who destroys one soul of Israel, is as [guilty] as if he destroyed the whole world; and every one who preserves one soul of Israel, is as [meritorious] as if he preserved the whole world.” This reference, then, does not prescribe anything respecting our duty to our *fellow-men*. Suppose, then, that the Jewish catechumen reads on in order to find out his duty to non-Israelites; on the following leaf he reads, “There is but one judgment for him that kills an Israelite or a Canaanitish servant. He is to be put to death for either. . . . An

Israelite who kills a sojourning proselyte,* is not to be executed by the tribunal on his account; for it is said, ‘But if a man come presumptuously upon *his neighbour*’† (Exodus xxi. 14), and it is not necessary to say that he is not to be executed on account of a Gentile. There is one judgment for him that kills a slave belonging to others or to himself: he is to be executed on the slave’s account; for the slave has taken upon himself the commandments, and has been added to the inheritance of the Lord.” (Ibid. ii. 10, 11.) Here the oral law tells him distinctly that he has not the same duty towards all his fellow-men; that there is a great difference between man and man; that for the Israelite the life of the murderer is to be forfeited, but for a proselyte of the gate, or an idolatrous Gentile, it is not to be forfeited. In the commentary to this law, we are told, that the murderer, in this case, though not amenable to the tribunal, is guilty “in the judgment of Heaven.” But

* i. e., A proselyte of the gate, who was allowed to sojourn in the land of Israel.

† i. e., Upon an Israelite. The sojourning proselyte is not looked upon as a neighbour; and still less the idolatrous Gentile.

suppose such a case was referred to a judge and jury of men, taught by this catechism that the oral law is divine, they could not decide that the murderer is to be executed; for this oral law tells them, that he is only amenable to the heavenly tribunal. Or suppose that a youth, educated according to the principles of this catechism, knew of an Israelite who had murdered "a sojourning proselyte, or an idolatrous Gentile," would it be his duty to inform against him, and to bring him to justice before a non-Israelite tribunal? The oral law tells him, first, that a murderer of this class, though guilty before God, ought not to be executed. It tells him, secondly, that if he informs against a brother Israelite, he is himself guilty of death; and that the circumstance of his brother being a wicked man makes no difference; for "it is forbidden to inform against an Israelite's person or property, so as to deliver him into the hands of Gentiles, even though he be a wicked man and a transgressor. . . . And that if he thus inform against an Israelite, he has no part in the world to come." (Hilchoth Chobel umazzik. ch. viii. 9.) As he hopes for salvation, then, he is bound not to bring him to justice. In

either of these cases, then, the course of justice would be stopped, and the murderer would go free. But what is the youth's own duty towards Gentiles?—for that has not appeared yet. Is he to spare the life of a fellow-man who happens to be a Gentile? The following passage gives the answer:—"As to the Gentiles not at war with us, and those who tend the small cattle belonging to Israel, and such like, we are not to cause their death; but it is unlawful to deliver them if they are near to death. For instance, if we see one of them who has fallen into the sea, he is not to be helped out; for it is written, 'Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour.' (Levit. xix. 16.) But such an one is not thy neighbour."* Here then, is the limit of the Israelite's duty to idolatrous Gentiles. He is not himself to take away his life; but if anything else, either men, or beasts, or elements, arise to take it away, he is not to interfere nor deliver him. With what face, then, could the compilers of the Bavarian Catechism head their chapter on the relative duty with the words—"Of the Duties referring to every human being, without any difference?"

* Hilchoth Rotzeach iv. 11.

The Frankfort Catechism, though, as we have seen above, it teaches the Divine authority of the oral law, is evidently much shyer of its support, and therefore more sparing of its citation. Its author, however, could not resist the temptation of representing the Talmud as an amiable and charitable book; and has, therefore, got the following question and answer:—(Question 216, p. 141.) “As to our teachers, the Talmudists, who in their day did not enjoy those great advantages which lay us under such great obligations,* what duties of love did they teach us to practise to our fellow-men of a different religion?” —Answer. “Every Israelite, as our wise men teach, is bound, according to the Divine law, to love as brethren those men out of every nation who follow the seven Noahitic commandments, to visit their sick, to bury their dead, to tend and to support their poor and distressed, as well as those of Israel. And, in general, there is no act of brotherly love which a true Israelite dare refuse to perform towards the observers of the Noahitic doctrines.” (Talmud. Treatise Gittin, 61.) The Bavarian Catechism

* He means the obligations to the Governments of Europe, which have ameliorated the condition of the Jews.

has a very similar passage, for which it refers to Maimonides; but Mr. Johlson, in the text of his book, refers to the Talmud itself, and prints the whole passage with quotation marks, as if it were a *veritable* extract. Now, what will the Jewish youth who look out his reference think when they find, that, on the leaf referred to, there is no such passage, and not the least mention of “the observers of the seven Noahitic commandments?” I can only suppose that Mr. Johlson did not himself refer to the Talmud, but took his reference at second-hand from some one less honest. I have now the “Treatise Gittin” before me; and the only passage, on the 61st leaf, at all resembling his supposed quotation, refers, not to the sons of Noah, but to idolaters. Literally translated, it is as follows:—“Our Rabbies have taught, that the poor of the aliens (נכרים) are to be fed with the poor of Israel; and the sick of the aliens to be visited with the sick of Israel; and the dead of the aliens to be buried with the dead of Israel, *on account of the ways of peace.*”^{*} And that I am right in interpreting “aliens” to mean “idolaters,” is plain, from

^{*} Talmud. Gittin., fol. 61, col. 1, at the end of the 10th line.

the authority of Maimonides, as quoted by Mr. Johlson himself, in the note. I can hardly think that so respectable a man as Mr. Johlson would intentionally and knowingly have made so gross a misrepresentation. I, therefore, suppose that some one else misled him; and this latter person, whoever he was, evidently did it in order to deceive Christians. He wishes to insinuate, for he does not plainly say so, that the Talmud considers Christians as "sons of Noah;" he therefore turned the word *aliens* into Noachidæ. He wishes, secondly, to prove that the Talmud teaches brotherly kindness to Christians from motives of love; he therefore left out the objectionable words, "for the sake of the ways of peace," which plainly shew, that idolaters are to be treated kindly merely from motives of policy. And he added the last sentence, for which there is no authority at all in the original. I must add, that such conduct, such misrepresentation, and such suppression of the truth, is, at all times, disgraceful, and that it must have the most pernicious effects upon the minds of the Jewish youth. If the compilers of these catechisms really believed that Christians are their brethren, they should have

stated it most distinctly, and as distinctly protested against the intolerance of the Talmud, and repudiated all notion of its Divine authority. The Christian, at all acquainted with the oral law, knows that there is no possibility of compromise. The reformers of the Jews must either renounce the Talmud, or they must be content to be considered as unenlightened and as intolerant as their forefathers. No catechism can be satisfactory to a competently-informed Christian which does not contain the following plain questions, and does not furnish explicit and definite answers:—

1st. Is the Talmud of Divine authority?

2d. Are Christians idolaters?

3d. If idolaters, how are they to be treated?

4th. If children of Noah, what made them such, seeing that the Talmud declares that that sort of proselyte is to be received only when the year of jubilee is celebrated?

No general professions of love and good-will, founded on mutilated Talmudic passages, will either reform their brethren or satisfy the minds of Christians. I can respect and esteem the genuine Talmudic Jew, who conscientiously believes that we are idolaters, and honestly

expresses his conviction. But I expect from the man who tells us that we are not idolaters, but his brethren, that he will as unequivocally renounce that system which teaches the contrary, and not endeavour to take advantage of our supposed ignorance. There are some already who take an interest in the study of Rabbinical literature; and I do earnestly hope that the subject of the foregoing pages will serve to convince many more of the importance of forming an acquaintance with the Rabbinical laws.

POSTSCRIPT CONCERNING THE FRENCH CATECHISM.

The foregoing pages have referred to two German-Jewish catechisms, but as it is a matter of great importance to convince both Jew and Gentile that the results of Jewish reform have hitherto been a mere illusion, it is worth the while to shew that the catechism printed, circulated, and appointed by the Central Consistory of the Israelites in France is not a jot better. The title-page is, itself, a curiosity. It contains, first, the title, "Elementary Compendium of Religious and Moral Instruction

for Young Israelite Frenchmen,"* and then follows the circular stamp or seal of the Central Consistory, in the centre of which are inscribed the words "PATRIE, RELIGION," as the motto. Of course, the expression "Israelite Frenchmen," instead of "French Israelites," is intended to imply that they have renounced the land of Israel as their country, and that France is now that *Patrie*, which, in their motto, they make to take precedence of religion. This would seem to indicate that they have given up the Old Testament as well as the Talmud, for, most assuredly, neither the one nor the other knows of any *Patrie* for Israelites, but the land which God promised to their fathers; at all events, whether Moses and the six hundred thousand Israelites who came up out of Egypt looked upon that country as their *Patrie*, and would have called themselves "Israelite Egyptians;" and whether Ezra and his compatriots who returned from Babylon, considered themselves as Israelite Babylonians, may well be doubted. This Central Consistory ought to publish an authorized commentary upon the

* שרשי דת אל ומישרים Précis élémentaire d'instruction religieuse et morale pour les jeunes Français Israélites. Paris: C. Ballard, Imprimeur du Roi, 1820.

prophet Obadiah, for he speaks of Zarephath* as a territory belonging to the Canaanites; and every body knows that, not only Rashi and Abarbanel but, the Jews throughout the world to this day say that Zarephath is the Hebrew name for France. Now, if the Israelites living in France be Frenchmen, there are several difficulties which the Consistory ought to remove. In the first place, Why does Obadiah say that the Israelites living in France are in captivity? In the second place, How can the Israelites be fellow-countrymen with the Canaanites? In the third place, How can they acknowledge the offspring of the Canaanites, whom God commanded them to destroy, as their brethren? In the fourth place, Does it not seem rather ungracious to expect to take possession of the country belonging to their brethren as the prophet here intimates? But we must get beyond the title-page. On page 9, the catechumen is asked, "What do you understand by this expression, *our religion?*" And the answer is, "I understand by our religion, faith in God, and

* Obadiah, verse 20. "The captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath."

obedience to the law which he gave the Israelites." On page 10, a similar answer is given to the question, "Is it sufficient to be one of the descendants of this holy man [Jacob], in order to deserve the name of a true Israelite?—No. It is necessary also to observe the law which God gave us and to fulfil the duties which this law imposes upon us." These answers make obedience to the law an essential part of the Israelite religion, and an essential characteristic in every true Israelite, what then does this catechism understand by the law? That it includes the Talmud, will appear from the following questions and answers which occur on pages 16, 17:—

"Q. What is the book which contains these ten commandments?—A. The Pentateuch, or five books of Moses (book of the law").

"Q. Does this book contain other precepts?—A. It contains all the other precepts of the law, all the written law."

"Q. Why do you say the *written* law?—A. Because there is also the *oral* law."

"Q. What is the *oral* law?—A. The true explanation of the written law; which Moses

equally received from God, though without the command to write it." . . .

"Q. Which are the principal books where this oral law is found preserved?—A. They are the Mishna and the Talmud or Gemara."

So that according to this catechism no Israelite has true religion, nor indeed deserves the name of Israelite, who does not obey the precepts of the oral law as contained in the Mishna and Gemara. What difference, then, we would ask, is there between the religion of the Israelite Frenchmen, and that of the Polish Jews, or that of R. Joseph Karo or Maimonides? These latter do not assert more than the Divine authority of the Talmud. The French Consistorial Catechism teaches no less. Perhaps some one will say that many of the precepts of the oral law have become obsolete, and are therefore no longer to be observed. The Consistory here negatives any such supposition, and declares positively, not only that it is unchangeable by man, but that God himself will never change it. On pages 20, 21, it recites the Thirteen Articles of the Jewish faith, of which the eighth is, "I believe that the law, as well written as oral, which we follow, is that which God gave

to Moses ;” and the ninth, “That God will never change it.” And it deserves to be remarked that the Consistory, in order to guard against the supposition of a change, has inserted into the eighth article the words—“As well written as oral,” which do not occur in the original Hebrew, as given in the Jewish Prayer-books.* There can be no doubt, that Maimonides intended to include the oral law. I do not wish to insinuate that they have misinterpreted his words, but only to point out their care in guarding the Jewish youth against the idea that the oral law has changed ; and to show that Judaism, as taught in this Catechism, is just the same as ever it was. With what consistency, then, can they, in answer to the question, “What is the love of our neighbour?” teach that “It is that sentiment which should move us to love all men.” Surely the Talmud, which forbids Israelites to save a drowning idolater, and a Jewish physician to cure a sick idolater, does not acknowledge all men as brethren. In the very next answer, this Catechism itself makes a qualification, which excludes idolaters.

“ Q. Why do you call all men *our neighbour*?

* “Daily Prayers,” fol. 57, col. ii.

—*A.* Because they are all our fellows (*nos semblables*). They are, like ourselves, the creatures of God, and the offspring, as we are, of our first parents Adam and Eve; we ought to do them all the good which we would that they should do unto us; God has said, ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ We ought to regard as our brethren, all men *who acknowledge God, the Creator of heaven and earth.*”*

Now, the heathen do not acknowledge the God who created heaven and earth, and thus the largest portion of mankind is, by this Catechism, excluded from brotherhood. The Talmud, as we have seen, when discussing the German catechisms, excludes all but Jews or Jewish proselytes. It does not even acknowledge the sons of Noah as brethren, and according to the Consistory, the Talmudic law is unchangeable. This Catechism, therefore, like the two former, is guilty of practising deceit towards either Jews or Christians. By teaching that the oral law is of Divine authority, and then that all men are our brethren, it renders itself as worthy of credit, as if it should teach that black is white, and white is black. The oral law is an exclusive system, and no man can assert that it

* Page 13, 14.

is charitable to persons of another religion, unless he wishes to deceive, or is himself grossly ignorant of its precepts. To which class the authors of this Catechism belong, it is not necessary to determine, though the omission of the word *Christian* in this, as well as the German catechisms, looks very suspicious. It talks of "*the Noachidæ, no matter what their particular creed;*" of "*all who acknowledge the Creator of heaven and earth;*" of "*the virtuous of all nations;*" and says that such are brethren to the Israelite Frenchmen: but it never says that Christians are included in these classes; it never says, "*Christians are our brethren;*" it never tries to remove or to combat that old and universal Jewish opinion, that Christians are idolaters. And yet this is the very point to which Jewish reformers, living in Christian lands, ought to direct their attention, and this is the very point on which Christians require satisfaction. We desire to know whether we are still numbered amongst those to whom the Talmud refuses the commonest offices of humanity, because, if so, it is all a delusion to talk of brotherhood, and charity, and justice. The English Jews, as will be seen from the following sketch, have not yet made any great

public demonstrations of reform. Individuals amongst them, it is known, have plans of the kind, and some small movements have been made, though hitherto without any effect; but, as a body, they belong to the respectable old-fashioned Rabbinical Jews, who believe in the oral law, and honestly profess what they believe. To their honour be it said, they have never attempted to pass off on the ignorance of Christians a fictitious picture of Talmudism, decked out in the robes of Liberalism. It is, therefore, to be hoped, that, when they do begin to reform, they will do it in the same straightforward spirit of honesty and integrity; that, when they are convinced that the uncharitable and anti-social system of the oral law is false, they will denounce it as such; that, when they believe that Christians are not idolaters, but their brethren, they will explicitly avow it, and as explicitly reject the Talmud and the various compendiums of the oral law, in which a contrary doctrine is inculcated.

VII.

ENGLISH JUDAISM, AS EXEMPLIFIED IN A CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE CHIEF RABBI IN LONDON, TO THE JEWISH CONGREGATIONS IN ENGLAND.

To define Judaism *as it was*, is comparatively easy. There can be but little doubt that the Judaism of former days was the religion of the Talmud, and therefore responsible for all the folly, intolerance, and superstition contained in that mass of traditions. To get a right notion of Judaism *as it is*, presents a little more difficulty. Reforms, and rumours of reforms, have unsettled the minds of the Jews themselves, and induced many amongst them to imagine that Judaism is no longer what it used to be; and thus some are led, with the most perfect good faith, to deny some of the essentials of their religion, and to attribute to it a measure of charity, and a freedom from superstition, not warranted by fact. To hear such persons speak, one would think that the Talmud

is now an obsolete book, and the power of the Rabbies a mere reminiscence of antiquity. There are, however, some authentic sources from which authoritative information may be obtained, and they lead us to conclude that Judaism as it is, is precisely the same as Judaism as it used to be—that is, that it is still the religion of the Talmud. These sources are various; there are, first, the catechisms published for the use of the Jewish youth, of which the last* published in this country, in describing Judaism, after mentioning the five books of Moses, says, “We also, from the same source, receive, as sacred and authentic, a large number of traditions not committed to writing, but transmitted by word of mouth down to later times; without which, many enactments in the Holy Bible could not have been understood and acted upon; these, termed traditional or oral laws, were collected and formed into a volume, called the ‘Mishna,’ by Rabbi Jehuda Hakodesh, A.M. 4150; in addition to this, we are guided by the explications of the later schools of pious and learned Rabbins, constituting what is now known by the name

* A Manual of Judaism, by Joshua Van Oven, Esq., M.R.C.S.L. London, 1835.

of the Talmud, or Gemara." (P. 22.) Here is the explicit avowal of a Jewish gentleman of education and respectability, that Judaism is not changed; and a specimen of the principles in which the Jewish youth of England are educated. They are still taught that the Mishna is "sacred and authentic," and that the Talmud is "a guide" in matters of religion. There is another source of information, which would place the matter beyond doubt; and that is, the records of the Jewish Beth din, or tribunal, in London, if they could only be consulted, but that is almost a matter of impossibility. One of the acts of this tribunal, however, has fallen into the hands of the writer, in the form of a printed circular letter, addressed, about two years and a-half ago, by the chief Rabbi in London, to the congregations in England, of which a copy is now given, and on which some remarks are offered. Part of it is in English, with a few Hebrew words interspersed, of which the translation is given in brackets, and part of it in that mixture of German and Hebrew commonly called Jewish, of which the translation is here printed, with the original Jewish subjoined, as it is quite a curiosity:—

“Whereas, Mr. Joseph Abraham Goldman, heretofore שוחט [slaughterer] at Southampton, appearing before me to be re-examined respecting his qualifications, according to custom, was then and there charged with having broken his תקיעת כף [striking of hands], or solemn engagement, into which he had entered when appointed to the office of שוחט [slaughterer] at Southampton. And myself and the בית דין [tribunal] having duly examined the charge brought against him, did find the said Mr. Joseph Goldman guilty thereof; so that no re-examination took place; but I and the בית דין [tribunal] did unanimously adjudge and declare him unfit to hold an office of trust like that of שוחט [slaughterer], and we did, therefore, על פי דין [according to judgment,] interdict his שחיטה [slaughtering].

“And whereas, notwithstanding the above unanimous decision, pronounced by myself and the בית דין [tribunal], the principal יהודים [Jews] residing at Southampton have thought proper to engage the said Mr. Joseph Abraham Goldman as their חזן [reader] and שוחט [slaughterer]; by accepting which engagement he has repeated the offence, and become guilty of breaking the first תקיעת כף [striking of

hands], attested by his own signature, into which every שוחט [slaughterer] enters upon his first receiving his קבלה, or license, from me. And although frequently remonstrated with, and exhorted to obey the decision of a competent tribunal (according to which the שחיטה [slaughtering] of Mr. Joseph Abraham Goldman is מרפה [unlawful]); and another שוחט [slaughterer] having been promised them by me, and that I would also settle their disputes with the קהילה [congregation] at Portsmouth, they still persist to retain and employ Mr. Goldman as their שוחט [slaughterer].

“ Having done everything in my power to remove this מכשול [scandal], but in vain, it now becomes my painful duty to give this PUBLIC NOTICE, that the שחיטה [slaughtering] at Southampton, together with the vessels and utensils of the יהודים [Jews] residing there, who use that שחיטה [slaughtering], are מרפה [unlawful], and that, therefore, every one, and particularly travellers, whose business calls them to that neighbourhood, אשר יראת ה' בלבם [in whose heart is the fear of the Lord,] are CAUTIONED against partaking of the meals, or eating in the house, of any one who uses such שחיטה [slaughtering].

“ In order that no one may remain exposed to sin from ignorance, [בשגגה,] I have directed this caution to be publicly proclaimed in שוהל [the synagogue.]

וכל חשומע לדברינו תבא עליו ברכת טוב,
ויכתב ויחתם לחיים טובים בר'ה הבע"ל עם כל
הכתוב לחיים בירושלים

[And every one that hearkeneth to our words, upon him shall come the blessing of good, and he shall be written and sealed to a good life at the festival of the New Year, which is now coming upon us for good, together with every one that is written to life in Jerusalem.]

“ London, 24th Elul, 5595 [1835.]

“ TO THE ELDERS OF ———.

“ Gentlemen,—Referring you to the above circular, you will please to have called out in שוהל [the synagogue], on הב"על ראש השנה [the feast of the New Year, which is coming upon us for good,] as under:—*

* The part that now follows is, in the original, in Jewish, and printed in Hebrew characters, as subjoined:—

ב"ה

הרב הגא"ב"ד דקהלות כנסת ישראל יצ"ו בלונדן ובקהלות שבמדינה,
ובית דינו הצדק לאסן הירמיש מכריו ומודיע זיון, דאס כ" יוסף אברהם
גאלדמאן שדי'. מלפנים שוחט ובודק בק"ק בריסמאל, אונד נאכהער אין

“ By the help of God.

“ The Rav. the Gaon, the president of the tribunal of the congregations of the Church of Israel (may their Rock and Redeemer preserve them), which are in London, and also in the congregations which are in the country, and his righteous tribunal, hereby proclaim and make known, that Mr. Joseph Abraham Goldman, who was formerly slaughterer and meat-examiner in the holy congregation of Bristol, and afterwards in Southampton, has, some months since, been convicted, both by the Rav. the Gaon, the president of the tribunal, and also before his righteous tribunal (may their Rock and their Redeemer preserve them), of having broken his solemn engagement of striking of hands; and, therefore, the said Mr. Joseph Abraham Goldman is inadmissible to give

סוֹמְהֵמֶפֶשֶׁאן, אֲשֶׁר זֶה אִיזָה חֲדָשִׁים אִיזֵשׁ אוֹיִסְגֶּפֶסוֹנֶדֶן וואַרדֶן זאוואהל
אצל הגא"ב ד' אלס לפני בית דינו הצדק יצ"ו, שעבר על חקיעת כף,
ומעתה איזש כ' יוסף אברהם גאלדמאן הנ"ל פסול לעדות ולשבועה, פיהל
מעהר ליתן לו נאמנות על שחיטות ובדיקות, ע"ך כל איש אשר בשם
ישראל יכונה ווירד אכטונג געבן, ניכט צו עססען משחיטתו, אונד
זאגאהר דיא כלים מבעלי בתים וועלכע עססן משחיטתו זינד מרפה,
כאשר כלים אשר יבושל בהם נבלות וטרפות. וכל השומע לדברינו תבא
עליו ברכת שוב, ויכתב ויחתם לחיים טובים בר"ה הבע"ל עם כל הכתוב
לחיים בירושלים: ה"ק שלמה בהגאון מוה"ו צ"ה זצ"ל חונה פה ק"ק
הנ"ל ואגפי':

testimony or to take an oath, and much less is he to be believed in matters of slaughtering or examining the slaughtered animals: therefore, every one who is surnamed with the name of Israel, will take heed not to eat of his slaughtering. Further, even the vessels of those householders who eat of his slaughtering are unlawful, as the vessels in which carrion and torn meat is boiled. And every one that hearkeneth to our words, upon him shall come the blessing of good, and he shall be written and sealed to a good life at the festival of the New Year, which is coming upon us for good, together with every one that is written to life in Jerusalem.

“The little one, Solomon, son of the Gaon, our teacher and our master, the Rav., Rabbi Hirsch (the memory of the righteous is blessed), dwelling here in the aforesaid holy congregation, and its precincts.”

Such is the official letter of the Rabbi to the Jewish congregations in England. It relates to a quarrel between the chief Rabbi in London and the Jewish congregation at Southampton, into the particulars of which, though not unknown, it is not necessary now to enter. The great interest of the letter

consists in the exhibition which it makes of the nature of that Judaism which is professed and practised in England. No one who reads this letter can doubt about its being still the old superstitious and intolerant religion of the Talmud. The whole letter presupposes, not only that the Talmud is a book of Divine authority, but that the Jewish congregations in England believe it to be so, and are guided by its decisions. This appears, first, from the turning point of the whole dispute, which is, the Talmudic doctrine of the slaughtering of animals for meat. According to the Talmud, the business of slaughtering is a mysterious science, requiring considerable learning in the operator, and besides, a special license from the Rabbi. Some idea of it may be formed from the following particulars:—Maimonides, in his treatise on the subject, defines the mode of performing the operation thus—"On which part of the animal is the slaughtering to be effected? On the windpipe, from the edge of the uvula downwards as far as the top of the extremity of the lungs, as these parts are situated when the beast stretches out its neck to feed: this is the place of the slaughtering in the windpipe; and all the

part outside which answers to this place is called the neck. If the beast forces itself, and stretches out its neck much, or if the slaughterer force the signs, and draws them upwards, and he slaughter at the right part of the neck, but afterwards it be found that the windpipe or œsophagus is not cut at the right place, then it is a doubtful case of carrion.”* In the same place he defines, that the knife or implement must have no gap in it: “But if there be anything like a furrow in the edge of the instrument wherewith the slaughtering is effected, even though the furrow be the least possible, the slaughtering is unlawful.” But besides any flaw in the knife, there are other things which may render the slaughtering unlawful, and which are considered as the great essentials of the Rabbinic act: “First; if the operator makes a pause of a certain length before the act is completed. Second; if the throat be cut at a single blow, as with a sword. Third; if the knife enters too deep and is hidden. Fourth; when the knife slips up or down from the right place. Fifth; when the windpipe or the œsophagus is torn, and comes out before the act is com-

* Hilchoth Sh’chitah, i. 7.

pleted." When all these conditions of lawfulness have been satisfied, the internal structure of the animal must be examined, and the result of this examination may be to pronounce that the meat is not fit for a Jew to eat. These few out of the multitudinous decisions and definitions of the oral law may shew the necessity of having the slaughterer first examined as to his competency, and will throw some light upon the chief Rabbi's letter. The power of the Rabbi to depose a slaughterer, and the course which the chief Rabbi has actually pursued in causing his sentence to be proclaimed in all the synagogues in England, are warranted by the following passage:—"If a slaughterer, who has not had his slaughtering-knife examined before a wise man [a Rabbi], slaughters by himself, his knife must be examined. If it be found in good order, he is to be excommunicated, because he may depend upon himself another time when it has a gap in it, and yet slaughter therewith. But if it be found to have a gap, he is to be deposed from his office and excommunicated, and proclamation is to be made that all the meat which he has slaughtered is carrion." Thus is it seen that the Judaism at present existing in England

is, in every particular, the religion of the Talmud, and that the intellect of this once holy, and still great and interesting people, is still in the fetters of superstition, forged nearly two thousand years ago. But it is not the intellect only that is affected. The poor are sadly oppressed, and the peace of all disturbed. These laws concerning slaughtering make the Jewish meat dearer than that to be had in our markets, and consequently more inaccessible to the poor. They also prevent them from partaking of the food provided for the sick or the destitute in hospitals and workhouses, and thus expose many to absolute starvation. In the case before us, we see that all the Jews of England are set against the Jews of Southampton, and forbidden to eat in their houses; and that all the food of these latter persons is pronounced to be no better than carrion. To Christians, this appears to be a very tyrannical decision; but if the oral law could have its full sway, the chief Rabbi and his righteous tribunal would not conclude with a mere oral declaration, but would, at least if they followed out the principles of the Talmud, summon Mr. Joseph Abraham Goldman, and the members

of the Southampton congregation, and give them a very sound flogging. The law is:—“That if an Israelite does not know the five things which invalidate the art of slaughtering, as we have explained, and slaughters by himself, it is unlawful both for himself and others to eat of that which he has slaughtered; for this case is much the same as that of doubtful carrion, and he that eats of it a quantity equal to an olive is to be flogged with the flogging of rebellion”—that is, without measure or mercy. But with respect to the Southampton Jews there can be no doubt at all. The chief Rabbi in London, and his righteous tribunal, have officially declared, that their food is no better than carrion; and consequently they are liable, whenever the commands of the oral law can be safely executed, to be visited with the aforesaid punishment. At present, Christian laws protect the Southampton Jews from the intolerance of their own religion; and as severity cannot be brought to bear upon the offenders, this letter contains another expedient for bringing them to submission; it promises blessings and life to those other Jews who will treat their Southampton brethren as excommunicate. Twice over the letter says, “And

every one that hearkeneth to our words, upon him shall come the blessing of good, and he shall be written and sealed to a good life at the festival of the New Year, which is coming upon us for good, together with every one that is written to life in Jerusalem." The letter here takes the Rabbinical Jews by their weak side. Every such person looks forward with fear and trembling to the New Year, for the oral law teaches that, "As the merits and sins of a man are weighed at the hour of his death, so likewise every year, on the festival of New Year's day, the sins of every one that cometh into the world are weighed against his merits. Every one who is found righteous is sealed unto life. Every one who is found wicked is sealed unto death. But the judgment of the intermediate class is suspended until the Day of Atonement." The principles according to which this judgment is supposed to be conducted are, that "If a man's merits exceed his sins, he is righteous. If his sins exceed his merits, he is wicked. If they be half and half, he is a middling or intermediate person." The consequence is, that as the New Year approaches, and especially in the month of Elul, in which the letter is dated, the Rabbi-

nical Jews become more and more careful in observing their rites and ceremonies, that the balance of the account may not be against them. The Rabbi, however, promises them, if they will hearken to his words, that they shall receive a blessing, and be sealed to life. And this shews us, at least, the estimate which the Rabbi and his righteous tribunal form of the state of the Jewish mind in England. They clearly take it for granted that the congregations to whom they wrote would be influenced by these superstitious feelings connected with the New Year—that is, they believe that the Jews of England are still under the influence of the Talmud.

But the most striking proof of the unlimited power of Talmudism, even in this country, is the expectation of the Rabbi and his colleagues in London, that all the congregations would receive their decision as that of a lawfully-authorized tribunal; and further, the fact that neither Mr. Joseph Abraham Goldman nor the Southampton congregation, so far as we know, have ever sought redress from the tribunals of the land. To the unthinking, it might appear that the conduct of the Southampton congregation manifested a loosening of Talmudic

bonds. But a little reflection shews that they have rebelled, not against the Talmud, but against the chief Rabbi in London; and this they might fairly do, even according to Talmudic principles, for it would not be easy to prove that even the oral law gives him that absolute power which he has hitherto exercised over all the Jewish congregations of England. They only doubt his right to control their affairs, but still think it necessary to have a Rabbinic slaughterer, and to observe the Rabbinic laws. And in the case of this letter, although it might seriously affect their temporal interests, and does actually bring forward a charge, however unfounded, against an individual, declaring that he is "inadmissible to give testimony or to take an oath," we have never heard that they questioned the lawfulness of the Jewish tribunal, or appealed to the Christian judicature. And yet it is evident that nothing but the Talmud can give the Rabbi and his colleagues any right to consider themselves as "a competent tribunal," and to expect the obedience due to it. The law of the land gives them no judicial authority whatever to try causes, or to pronounce a sentence detrimental to the character of any one. Their

claims rest altogether upon the Talmud; and the issuing of such a letter, containing such a judicial sentence, proves beyond all doubt that the Jews of England receive the Talmud, not only as the foundation of their religious belief, but as the code of law by which they are governed. Here, then, is a practical proof, that Talmudism is not merely a system of religious belief, but a code of civil law, which has its judges and its tribunals, and lords it, not only over the consciences, but over the persons, the characters, and the dealings of the Jews in England, as well as elsewhere. The grand inference, however, is, that the Judaism of this country and age is just the same as the Judaism of Poland and Morocco, or of the tenth century. Individuals of the Jewish nation have changed their private opinions, and we know that a respectable body of the Portuguese Jews in London are now endeavouring to effect a public renunciation of some parts of Judaism; but the system itself still remains the same, chargeable with the same folly and intolerance, and putting forth the same pretensions. It is, therefore, high time for those Jews who, we are assured, sincerely hate the intolerance and repudiate

the folly of the Talmud, to consider whether they will still suffer themselves and their nation to be judged of by the principles of that book; or whether, by an open, honest, and manly renunciation, they will deliver themselves from that unmerited load of prejudice which must ever rest on them so long as the Talmud is known to be the source of their faith and the guide of their conduct. It will not do to make fine distinctions between one set of doctrines and another; either the oral law is wholly obligatory, or it is not obligatory at all. Either it is wholly true, or wholly false. If the laws respecting the slaughtering of animals, and the sentence of Rabbinic tribunals, be in force, and according to the chief Rabbi's letter they are so, then the intolerant laws respecting idolaters and Gentiles are also in force. Then all Gentiles who study in the law, or keep a Sabbath-day, are guilty of death;* then it is unlawful to help a drowning idolator;† it is lawful to kill an apostate Jew, either by force or by fraud, as is most convenient;‡ there is no such thing as marriage amongst Gentiles;|| and, whenever

* Hilchoth M'lachim, c. x. 9. † Hilchoth Accum, x. 1.

‡ Hilchoth Mamrim, c. 3. || Hilchoth M'lachim, viii. 3.

the Jews have the power, it will be their duty to convert all nations by force, and to put all who refuse to the sword.* It is not meant to charge any particular individual of the Jewish nation with holding these principles, but if the Talmud be true and binding, and that it is so the last Jewish catechism published in this country asserts, and the chief Rabbi's letter implies, these are the tenets and doctrines of Judaism, and hitherto the members of the Jewish persuasion have not renounced them. They still profess a religion which professes that these doctrines are divine. If their profession be sincere, then they really hold, and, no doubt, are prepared to act upon, these principles. If their profession be insincere, the sooner they renounce it the better. They will have more peace in their own consciences, and will contribute in no small degree to restore their nation to that position to which their origin, their talents, and the benefits conferred upon the world by their forefathers, so well entitle them.

* Hilchoth M'lachim, viii. 4.

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